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THE IMPACT OF RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS ON BLACK ATHLETES:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING AND SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

by

TERRENCE A. JORDAN II

(Under the Direction of Leon E. Spencer)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore Black collegiate athletes experiences with racial microaggressions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Black student athletes regarding their experiences of subtle forms of racism within sport and academia. Findings of the analysis indicated that eight primary these emerged which included ascription of intelligence/status, assumed superiority of White cultural values and communication styles, exoticism, second class citizenship, assumed universality, denial of individual racism, coping strategies, and underdeveloped incidents and responses dealing with racial microaggressions.

INDEX WORDS: Racial Microaggressions, Black Athletes, Racism, Discrimination, Stereotypes, Prejudice, Sport, Experience, Sport Psychology, Counseling

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B.S., University of Minnesota, 2008

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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2010

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Electronic Version Approved:  
May 2010

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the person who introduced me to the concept of racial microaggressions, my best friend and brother, Charles A. Helm. Our many conversations over the years served as a catalyst in attempting to truly understand this phenomenon. Thanks for bringing this piece of research to its fruition. Continue to be the change you want to see in the world Dr. Helm.

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I wish to thank family, especially my grandparents and parents, who have been an integral part of my success. Giving your last even when you do not have it has always been appreciated and I will continue to live in a way that reflects your teachings. I wish to acknowledge my colleagues within the Georgia Southern Sport Psychology and Counselor Education programs. Lastly and far from the least, special gratitude is extended to my friend and companion, Cierra, whose unconditional love has meant more than I can express herein.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The impact of racism begins early as we are exposed to misinformation about people different from ourselves. Poverty disproportionately affects minorities, school segregation exists, and there are huge disparities in wealth, education, and healthcare. However, before themes around racism can be approached, one must first develop an understanding of what is meant by the term race. Winant (2006) contends that there is a deepening and worldwide contradiction in the meaning and structure of race and racism. In discussing race we must maneuver between something that is objective and fixed, to something being a mere illusion or ideology (Winant, 1998). The distortion of historical information about people of color leads people to make assumptions that may go unchallenged (Tatum, 1997). Tatum (1997) makes the distinction that racism cannot be entirely explained as a form of prejudice alone and must be looked at as a system of advantage based on race. This definition allows us to see that:

“Racism, like other forms of oppression, is not only a personal ideology based on racial prejudice, but a system involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals” (Tatum, 1997, p. 7).

There is no question that differences exist among racial and ethnic populations as our eyes and ears confirm this daily. “Human diversity is a fact of life, and people throughout history have always categorized one other, often using physical appearance and cultural characteristics to do so” such as skin color, body shape, hair color, and eye form (Coakley, 2007). The first impressions of attitudes toward Blacks date back to the sixteenth century where Englishmen found the natives of Africa very different from themselves. Upon sight, Africans were distinguished most notably for the characteristic of their skin color (Jordan, 1968). Historically,

the color black was an exaggeration associated with Africans complexion and had a powerful impact upon Englishmen perceptions (Jordan, 1968). During the seventeenth century, Europeans developed the idea of distinct races. As they settled and colonized land, categorization systems were developed to distinguish the populations they encountered. Europeans used the term race to refer to people with particular national origins (Chinese), ethnic practices (Basque people in Spain), religious beliefs (Hindus), and social status (the poor people) (Coakley, 2007).

For hundreds of years, these differences have been used to categorize people into groups called races. The idea of race assumes that simple external differences rooted in biology are linked to more complex internal differences like athletic ability, musical aptitude, and intelligence (California newsreel, 2003). The notion of this belief is based on the premise that race is biologically real. Hammonds (2003) asserts if we take a look at African Americans, we will see that every single body part of theirs has been subjected to the analysis for the sake of searching for a biological basis to race. When a racial population is identified, it infers that a classification system is in place and divides human beings into different categories. However, from a biological standpoint, there are not any genetic markers that define races, as human beings are more similar than dissimilar. To understand why the idea of race is a biological myth requires a major paradigm shift. Goodman (2003) understands this shift by relating it to how the world must of not been flat. Race is not based on biology rather it is an idea that we ascribe to biology (California newsreel, 2003).

If race does not exist biologically, then what is it? Race is an illusion yet profoundly real. Attached to the characteristics of darker or lighter skin, straight, curly or coiled hair are values, assumptions, and historical meanings. Over time, people have used race and ethnicity to identify populations. The shift to a biologically based notion of race transpired as northern Europe sought

justification for colonizing and exercising power over African Americans (Coakley, 2007).

Although race, is not a biological reality, being classified as Black, Asian, Latino, or Native American has never carried the same advantages as being White in our society.

### *Race in the United States*

In the United States, race and racial ideologies is unique and emerged during the seventeenth century as proslavery colonists developed justifications for enslaving Africans. By the nineteenth century, many Whites believed Africans and Indians were subhuman and incapable of being civilized. The notion was that by nature, people of color were socially, intellectually, and morally inferior to Whites. This notion became popular for political expansion, justification of new laws (e.g., Jim Crow), and researched published that claimed “natural superiority” (Coakley, 2007). For example, Japanese immigrant Takao Ozawa, attended the University of California argued that his skin was physically white and that race should not matter for citizenship. The Supreme Court however decided that the Japanese were not legally white based on science. Less than a year later, in the case of *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the court contradicted itself by concluding that Asian Indians were not legally White, even though science classified them as Caucasian (California newsreel, 2003). It is evident that physical differences be based on the common understanding of White men. Not only were Native Americans removed from their lands, the Supreme Court legalized segregation. During the process, racial ideology was used to link whiteness with American identity, a privilege and above all exclusive (California newsreel, 2003).

The primary purpose of racial ideologies has been to justify racism, or “attitudes, actions, and policies based on the belief that people in one racial category are inherently superior to people in one or more other categories” (Coakley, 2007). According to Dovidio (2000), racism is

related to the concepts of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. The coordinated interactions of these concepts refer to “unfair social behavior, attitudes, and beliefs (Dovidio, 2000). Jones (1997) as cited in Dovidio (2000), racism has three fundamental components. First, it is rooted in beliefs (i.e., stereotypes) about group differences that are assumed to reflect biological differences. Second, racism involves differentiated negative evaluations and feelings about the other group relative to one’s own (i.e., prejudice). Third, it reflects disparate treatment of groups by individuals and institutions in ways that are justified by and tend to perpetuate negative beliefs, attitudes, and outcomes (i.e., discrimination).

People are not born with ideas about race, racism, or stereotypes. However, as people interact with others, the process of making race and racial meanings is built into the cultural fabric of the United States and people learn to give meanings toward others (Solorzano, Ceja, Yosso, 2000). As one experiences life, his or her race salience may remain neutral, low, or high (Sue, 2008). An individual who is subjected to racism will have a high race salience and move through different stages of identity development.

### *Race and Sports in the United States*

The realm of sports calls for intricate conundrums related to race and ethnicity. The influence of racism in the U.S. has always posed a challenge for Blacks. Post World War II Black golfers in the south faced obstacles, as they were not allowed to tee off on public courses (Kirsch, 2007). Like golf, Black athletes in Major League Baseball faced the same obstacles until Jackie Robison broke the color line in 1947. The integration of Blacks into professional baseball was an immense step towards desegregation and the civil rights revolution. An abundance of research on race stems beyond the playing field (Bialik, 2008). Baseball, along with many other sports, has always been a venue for studies of diversity and discrimination. Race influences

assignments to specific jobs and how diversity affects company success (Bialik, 2008).

According to the 2006 Racial and Gender Report Card for the NFL, 74% of the radio and television announcers are White, and 13% are Black (Lapchick, Ekiyor, & Ruiz, 2007).

It was not very long ago when Fuzzy Zoeller made off-color remarks in regards to Tiger Woods performance at the 1997 Masters Championship (cnn.com, 1997). He stated,

"That little boy is driving well and he's putting well. He's doing everything it takes to win. So, you know what you guys do when he gets in here? You pat him on the back and say congratulations and enjoy it and tell him not to serve fried chicken next year. Got it...or collard greens or whatever the hell they serve."

Zoeller, defended his comments by saying they weren't meant to be racially derogatory and were misconstrued. Remarks such as Zoeller's, occur in the media on a moderate basis. In 2007, American radio host Don Imus assaulted the Rutgers, majority Black, women's basketball team by referring to them as "nappy headed hoers."

Research has suggested that sports commentary attribute to the ideas surrounded on race in the United States as Black athletes are praised for physical attributes while Whites are credited for their cognitive abilities (McCarthy, Jones, and Potrac, 2003). These stereotypical representations are consistent across different media forms. In critically analyzing racial relations and sport, Birrell (1989) asserts that it is important to examine why some racial or ethnic groups are present in sport while others are non-existent. In addition, why is it that sport pervades the culture of Blacks as opposed to other cultures such as Chicanos, Asian Americans, or Native Americans (Birrell, 1989).

The sport media has the capacity to bring light to a variety of issues dealing with racial representations (Berstein and Blain, 2002). It has essentially had the ability to construct people's experiences thus it is important to filter out the right messages to viewers. The media is able to replicate images that associate "Blackness" with being naturally gifted to perform well in sport

and “Whiteness” as being cognizant with the ability to perform mental tasks (van Sterkenburg and Knoppers, 2004). LeBron James, the first African American male to ever appear on the cover of Vogue magazine perpetuated this stereotype as he held supermodel Gisele in one hand, and basketball in one other, dressed in athletic wear (“Strike a Pose,” 2008). Within traditional media (i.e., newspaper, media guides, television), certain ideologies have been attributed to the success of white and black athletes through sport. Consistent findings have been noted in sport studies surrounding commentary around black athletes being “talented” and white athletes being the “intellectuals” (Bruce 2004; Sabo, Jansen, Tote, Duncan, & Leggett, 1996). Not only has this phenomenon occurred through sports commentary but also in newspaper and magazine coverage (Fullerton, 2006).

### *The New Racism*

Today the thread of racism still runs through the American culture and impacts everyone at all levels. It is common for many people to associate racism with blatant and overt acts of discrimination (Sue, 2008). However, current research suggests that these types of discrimination have transformed into less conscious acts that are more subtle in nature (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). In the context that we currently live, racism is dormant, camouflaged, and covert to the point where it is hard to discern. This new form of racism has been coined as microaggressions (Sue, 2008; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). According to Sue et. al (2007),

Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group, and are expressed in three forms: microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations (p.72).

For the purpose of this study, Sue’s (2008) definition of microaggressions is most concise. The first type of microaggression, microassaults, refers to “a blatant verbal, nonverbal, or



environmental attack intended to convey discriminatory and biased sentiments” (p.111). This type of microaggressions is related to the “old-fashioned” form of racism; overt. The second type, microinsults, are “unintentional behaviors or verbal comments that convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person’s racial heritage identity, gender identity, or sexual orientation identity” (p.111). Although this type of microaggression happens outside the level of conscious awareness, these indistinct aggressions are characterized by hidden messages. The third and final type, microinvalidations are “verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or dismiss the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of the target group” (p. 112). Like microinsults, these are also unintentional and outside the level of awareness.

### *Purpose of Study*

Currently, there is little to no research that examines the relationship between racial microaggressions and Black collegiate athletes. What we know about microaggressions is that it leads to psychological distress in Black Americans (Sue, 2008). What we do not know is the impact that it may have on Black college athletes’ participation in sport and the classroom. Racial microaggressions do exist in both academic and social spaces in the collegiate environment (Soloranzo, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). To examine this phenomenon, this research proposes a critical race theory approach to explore the types of microaggressions experienced by Black athletes in academic institutions. The primary research question for this study will be:

- 1) How do Black student-athletes experience racial microaggressions in sport and the classroom?

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature will be presented in four sections. It will give an account on general descriptions in reference to race, racial ideologies, and racism. The scope will narrow to critical race theory and racial microaggressions. Following, racial representations in sport will be discussed, specifically stereotypes that exist amongst African Americans in the media. Lastly, this review of literature will highlight the author's proposed research investigation.

#### *Race, Racial Ideology, and Racism*

Race was once thought to be a natural phenomenon, not a social one, to be considered eternal, not transient (Winant, 2006). It is a concept that signifies and symbolized sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies. The ideology of race became popular as the need for political expansion became important for the newly formed United States, after the abolition of slavery and implementation of Jim Crow laws, and as scientist published influential research that claimed to prove the existence of race, the “natural superiority” of Whites, and the “natural inferiority” of Blacks (Coakley, 2007). Research shows that there is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of race, and the sociohistorical categories employed to differentiate among these groups reveal themselves, to be arbitrary (Winant, 2006). Although its meaning may have varied, Winant (2006) states the concept of race retained its character as an essence. Race has been understood as an ineluctable and natural framework of difference among human beings, however the concept has taken a shift in the twenty first century yet persevering in its original form (Winant, 2006).

Jones (1997) asserts that racism is related to the concepts of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (as cited in Dovidio, 2001). Racism can also consists of signifying practices that

naturalized human identities based on racial categories or concepts, social action that produces unjust allocation of socially valued resources, and social structure that reproduces such allocations (Winant, 2006). Racism involves a widely accepted racist ideology and the power to deny other racial groups the “dignity, opportunities, freedoms, and rewards” that are available to one’s own group through “a socially organized set of ideas, attitudes, and practices” (Jones, 1997). Jones (1997) and Dovidio (2000) highlights social levels at which racism operates. The first, individual racism is affiliated with racial prejudice, personal stereotypes, and discrimination to create and support disparities between members of different groups. The second, institutional racism refers to the intentional or unintentional manipulation of institutional policies that restrict the opportunities of particular groups of people. Wacquant (2002) outlined four ‘peculiar institutions’ that have successively operated to define, confine, and control African Americans in the history of the United States. These four institutions are slavery (1619-1865), Jim Crow (1865-1965), the ghetto (North, 1915-1968), and the hyperghetto and prison (1968-present). Lastly, the third social level of racism at which it operates is cultural racism. This involves beliefs about the superiority of one’s cultural heritage over that of other races and the expression of this belief in individual actions or institutional policies.

Although overt expressions of prejudice may decline significantly across time, subtle manifestations of bias may persist (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). According to the aversive-racism perspective, many people who support egalitarian principles believe themselves to be non-prejudiced also unconsciously harbor negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks and other historically disadvantaged groups (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). The aversive-racism framework further suggests that contemporary racial bias is expressed in indirect ways that do not threaten the aversive racist’s non-prejudiced self-image (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Research by

psychologist (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000), on aversive racism have allowed for a defined taxonomy of racial microaggressions.

### *Critical Race Theory*

To address racial microaggressions experienced by Black athletes NCAA Division-I sports, critical race theory (CRT) was utilized, which has its roots in legal studies and radical feminism, sociology, history, and ethnic studies. Though initially utilized in legal studies, CRT has been extended to other areas. As a theoretical framework, many proponents have defined Critical Race Theory. Cornell West (1995) offered one of the most profound definitions for CRT that stated:

In short, Critical Race Theory is an intellectual movement that is both particular to our postmodern (and conservative) times and part of a long tradition of human resistance and liberation. On the one hand, the movement highlights a creative—and tension-ridden—fusion of theoretical self-reflection, formal innovation, radical politics, existential evaluation, reconstructive experimentation, and vocational anguish. But like all bold attempts to reinterpret and remake the world to reveal silenced suffering and to relieve social misery, Critical Race Theorists put forward novel readings of hidden past that disclose the flagrant shortcomings of the treacherous present in the light of unrealized—though not unrealized—possibilities for human freedom and equality (p. xxi).

While CRT etiological roots are firmly planted in law, it has found broad application into other disciplines. Within the field of education, critical race theory is increasingly being applied. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) that the field of education uses the theory to understand issues of hierarchy, tracking, curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing.

Critical Race Theory has three major postulates: 1) Racism is pervasive not aberrant, 2) Race is a social construct, and 3) Gains for populations of color often coincide with the dictates of White self-interest. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) assert the pervasiveness of racism in daily life renders persons desensitized to its insidious institutionalized forms. In regards to the second postulate, Delgado and Stefancic maintain that because there is, indeed, a socially constructed

quality to racialized identities people of color should resist the consignment of their identity construction to the dominant group which has historically and conveniently racialized groups when it served its purposes and conversely sought to de-racialize groups when it served its purpose. The third postulate, interest convergence is defined as the opportunism exhibited by those in power with respect to selectively co-opting and/or exploiting the oppression of racialized minorities when it serves their interests. CRT has four overarching themes which are 1) critique of liberalism, 2) interest convergence, 3) revisionist interpretations of history, and 4) structural determinism.

The critical race theory framework for education is different from other CRT frameworks because it simultaneously attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as research paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these constructs intersect to impact communities of color (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso (2002) identified five elements of CRT that focus on: a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, b) the challenge to change dominant ideology, c) the commitment to social justice, d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and e) the transdisciplinary perspective. Furthermore CRT focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of communities of color and offers a liberatory and transformative method for examining racial/ethnic, gender, and class discrimination (Solorzano, et. al., 2000).

### *Racial Microaggressions*

In reviewing the literature on subtle and contemporary forms of racism, the term “racial microaggressions” best describe the phenomenon in its everyday occurrence. In 1978, psychologist Chester Pierce first coined the term and refers to them as subtle, stunning, often

automatic, and nonverbal exchanges. Racial microaggressions have also been described as “subtle insults (verbal/nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously” (Solórzano et al., 2000). In essence, “microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). More frequent and insidious racial microaggressive messages are commonly manifested by White individuals who do not consciously recognize the racist origins or implications to their actions (Constantine et al., 2008). Exchanges of microaggressions are pervasive and automatic to the point where they are dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous (Sue et al., 2007).

The taxonomy of microaggressions developed by Sue and Capodilupo (2008) manifest themselves in three distinct forms—microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. A microassault is an “explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions” (Sue et al., 2007). Examples include referring to someone as “colored” or “Oriental,” using racial epithets, discouraging interracial interactions, deliberately serving a White patron before someone of color, and displaying a swastika. Microassaults are similar “old-fashioned” forms of racism. This type of microaggression is deliberate and expressed in private situations that allow the perpetrator a degree of anonymity.

A microinsult is characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity. This type of microaggression represents subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of color (Sue et al., 2007). The context in which microinsults is made are very

important. In addition, these can occur nonverbally by conveying the messages that people of color are their contributions are not important.

A microinvalidation is characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color (Sue et al., 2007). For example, when Blacks are told that “I don’t see color” or “We are all human beings,” the effect is to negate their experiences as racial/cultural beings (Sue et. al, 2007).

Racial microaggressions have been identified in nine categories with distinct themes. The themes include: alien in one’s own land, ascription of intelligence, color blindness, criminality/assumption of criminal status, denial of individual racism, myth of meritocracy, pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, second-class status, and environmental invalidation (Sue et al., 2007).

### *Race Representations in Sport and the Media*

The perceptions of race, athletic ability and intellectual capacity are projected in sports persistently. Stone, Perry, and Darley (1997) found that people rely on stereotypes of Black and White athletes to guide their evaluations of an athlete’s abilities and performance. Black people were rated as exhibiting significantly more athletic ability whereas White people exhibit significantly more intelligence in sport (Stone et al., 1997). The general process of perceptual confirmation of stereotypes extends to the domain of athletic performance (Stone et al., 1997). Stone et al. (2007) asserts it is important to examine whether attributions about the relation between race and athletic performance cause discrimination against Blacks who are more intelligent or Whites who are more physically talented than athletic stereotypes predict.

Other research shows that college students hold implicit theories of ability in sports (Li, Harrison, & Solmon, 2004). Both African Americans and European Americans were more likely

to express an incremental rather than an entity theory, meaning individuals embraced the belief that through effort and hard work, sports ability is reflected by performance and can be improved (Li et al., 2004). The nature of ability merits attention as the definition in sport is not clear thus future research should address how it is defined and clarify the meaning and relationships between ability and performance (Li et al., 2004).

While African Americans have achieved equality in sport participation at the professional and intercollegiate level, the same cannot be stated for the media coverage of these events (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). “The announcer’s booth is a conducive environment for priming racial stereotypes” (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). Announcers perpetuate negative images of African American athletes when describing them as people. Throughout the history of television, Blacks and the Black community have been underrepresented in, and excluded from television coverage. Sports announcers construct race while commenting on games, neglecting the impact that it may have on viewers (Buffington & Fraley, 2008). People often express the idea that Blacks and Whites possess different physical and mental skills related to sport, some of who feel that differences are attributable to race. (Buffington & Fraley, 2008).

Over or under representation of racial groups in sport may provide misleading ideas about sport participation and may contribute to Whites avoiding sports in which Blacks have excelled and vice versa (Coakley, 2007). Due to the fact that there is a majority of Blacks in professional basketball (Lapchick, Hanson, Harless, Johnson, 2009), the ideas developed about race, physical abilities, and chances of success have a direct effect on youth, and how, and in which sports athletes choose to participate (Coakley, 2007).



### *Qualitative Investigation*

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of Black athletes encounters with racial microaggressions. The aim of qualitative research is to gather an understanding of people's experiences from their own worldview. There are a number of approaches to qualitative research. In spite of this, the data generated from this study will be analyzed from a qualitative procedure referred to as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as illustrated by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). IPA focuses on research participants' comments about their experiences, views, understandings, and perceptions of different phenomena. By using this methodological approach, the researcher will be able to examine individuals' subjective experiences and understand their accounts of the processes by which they make sense of various experiences and circumstances (Smith, et al., 2009).

As there is little to no research on athletes and this phenomenon, it is important to understand how Blacks experience and cope with racial microaggressions. Qualitative research has the ability to provide rich thick descriptions on different perspectives. In order to understand the impact of racial microaggressions on Black athlete's, it is important to allow the participants to speak open and freely, in hopes that a better understanding of the phenomenon will be gained. To grasp the meaning behind the current study, one must have a great understanding of race, racial ideologies, and racism.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Paradigm*

This study is approached from a critical race theorist perspective, meaning this inquiry is aimed at raising the consciousness of those being oppressed because of historically situated structures tied to race, gender, and class (Hatch, 2002). With raising consciousness around racial microaggressions comes to providing understandings that lead to social change. Critical race theory identifies racism, racist injuries, and their source. “When the ideology of racism is examined and racist injuries are named, victims of racism can find their voice” (Solorzano, et. al., 2000). Those who experience and are harmed by overt or covert forms of racism discover that they are not alone in their marginality. Participants become empowered through hearing and recalling stories of their own and others. In this study, critical race theory is applied to the concepts of racial microaggressions and the experiences of Black student-athletes.

#### *Bracketing*

Prior to investigating the experiences of participants, the researcher must complete the interview protocol to illuminate any preconceived biases so that data collection and analysis are not shaped by these biases. Since the primary researcher will be carrying out the data analysis, the researcher will engage in a bracketing interview to minimize the influence of his biases on the research. Constantine, Smith, Redington, and Owens (2008) define bracketing as “the process by which an investigator uses self-reflection and reflexivity to identify, explore, and set aside presuppositions she or he might have about the phenomenon being studied” (p. 351).

A bracketing interview will be conducted with the researcher and analyzed in a systematic approach to gather the emotions, thoughts, and reactions of the phenomenon as it

relates to the researcher's environment and past experiences. As a Black American and prior athlete, it will be most responsible for the study to explore my biases before further investigation of the phenomenon. My interest concerning this topic will be discussed below.

Currently, I am a second year graduate student enrolled in the sport psychology program at Georgia Southern University. As a Black/African American, I have an understanding of what it is like to interact on different levels of consciousness. I have been socialized into thinking and acting what it means to be an "American", as well as what it means to be a "Black American," each being important to my identity. The term American and Black American has always gathered my interest because it acknowledges that racial differences exist among people. At an early age I have always known that certain groups of people are marginalized through different types of oppression such as racism. Throughout my life, I have experienced overt and covert forms of racism. These forms of racism have had an impact on me as a Black male, student, and athlete. In talking with other Black Americans, there are similar experiences that we share in regards to this topic. Patterns include assigning intelligence to one based on his or her race, being treated as an inferior human being, and being presumed to be dangerous. Due to personal experiences, I feel as though it is important to recognize the role that overt and covert forms of racism have on Black Americans. Specifically, I am interested in systematically examining the phenomenon between racial microaggressions (i.e., subtle racism) and Black NCAA Division-I athletes.

### *Bias and Bracketing Exercise*

Because the primary researcher conducted the interviews and carried out the data analysis, he engaged in a bracketing exercise throughout the study to minimize the influence of his biases on the research. Bracketing is the process by which an investigator uses self-reflection

and reflexivity to identify, explore, and set aside presumptions he or she might have about the phenomenon under investigation.

Examples of the bracketing exercises that the primary investigator engaged in included keeping notes and journaling emotions, thoughts, and reactions he experienced while reviewing the transcripts and writing a series of narratives discussing the ways in which this study affected him on a personal level.

### *Pilot Study*

Before the actual interviews are conducted, a pilot interview was completed with 1 Black male, whom played Division-I football for a Big Ten program. The primary researcher used the feedback gleaned from the pilot interview to amend the interview protocol. Examples of feedback obtained from the pilot interview were eliminating questions, making questions clearer, and adding follow-up questions related to the experiences of Black student athletes that play for a NCAA Division-I sport.

The interviewer included an Black/African American male master's student in sport psychology. The interview took place in a private office over the telephone and was intended to obtain descriptions of the "central themes" of the participants' experiences with racism and racial microaggressions. Prior to the interview, the term racial microaggression was defined for the participants.

The interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The audiotaped interview was transcribed, and the primary researcher deleted any identifying information regarding the participant. The transcription was reviewed for accuracy by the primary researcher, and minimal utterances such as "hmm" and "uhh" were deleted.

### *Participants*

Purposeful criterion sampling procedures will be used in this study. The logic of this sampling method is to review and study all cases that meet predetermined criterion (Patton, 2002). The criteria for participation in this study will include participants that self identify as Black, be a current college student-athlete representing a NCAA Division I sports team, acknowledge that subtle forms of racism exist, and have experienced subtle forms of racism in academia and sport. Inquiries will be sent out to coaches and players in regards to this study. Once the Black athletes have been identified, a request for an interview will be sent. A total of eight to ten Black males and females from Georgia Southern University will be used for data collection. Although this sample size appears to be small, it is not considered to be for phenomenological inquiry (Patton, 2002).

### *Procedure*

The primary researcher will select between eight to ten participants from the pool that fit the criteria for the study. Participants will be informed that participation in the study is completely voluntary and methods will be taken to assure confidentiality. Methods of confidentiality will include coding the transcription to eliminate identification of the co-participants as well as keeping any files with identifiable information in a locked drawer in the Southern Performance Clinic at Georgia Southern University. The primary researcher and members of the research committee will have access to the locked drawer. Prior to the interview, co-participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form, again stating that they understand participation in the research study is completely voluntary as well as stating that (1) interviews will be digitally recorded for future transcriptions, (2) the participants can refuse to be interviewed or cancel the interview at any time, (3) the participants will be allowed to ask

questions at any time, (4) no incentives will be due to them, (5) transcribed interviews will be sent to them for review prior to analysis, and (6) the transcribed interviews will be reviewed by the researcher and the research team for thematic structure identification.

### *Interview protocol*

All participants in the study will be asked the same questions in order to gain an understanding of the participants' experience of being a Black collegiate athlete at a predominately White university. An interview guide approach as well as a standardized open-ended interview approach will be employed in this study. The combination of these two strategies offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and determining when it's appropriate to explore certain topics in greater depth (Patton, 2002). Some characteristics of the interview guide approach is that topics and issues are specified in advance, in outline form (Patton, 2002). The interviewer decides the particular order and wording of the questions during the course of the interview. Some characteristics of the standardized open-ended interview is that the exact wording and particular order of the questions are determined prior to the interview, with all participants being asked the same open-ended questions in the exact order (Patton, 2002). The combination of these types of interviews together will increase comprehensiveness of the data, as well as the comparability of responses. Lastly, the interviews remain fairly conversational and situational, and reduce the interviewer effects of bias (Patton, 2002). The interview protocol will be based on a review of literature on aversive racism, racial microaggressions, and Black Americans' experiences of racism (Constantine et al., 2008).

During the interview, the participants will be prompted with some of the following open-ended questions:

1. In thinking about your daily experiences as a Black athlete, could you describe a situation in which you witnessed or were personally subtly discriminated against because of your race?
2. Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable, insulted, or disrespected by a comment that had racial overtones.
3. In what ways have others made you feel “put down” because of your cultural values or communication style?

By using open-ended questions, the goal is to allow the participant to express their honest feelings and opinions of their personal experiences with racial microaggressions. Patton (2002) suggests that open-ended questions present the opportunity for individuals to speak openly and candidly, without judgment or predetermined beliefs from the interviewer. To gain more insight from the participants’ responses, follow-up and probing questions will be used to further clarify and attain deeper elaborations. An example of a probing question would be:

1. “You said \_\_\_\_; will you please elaborate on that experience?”
2. “I want to make sure I understand you, will you please provide another example of that feeling?”
3. “What did you mean when you said \_\_\_\_?”
4. Is there is something related to the topic that you would have liked me to ask?

### *Data Analysis*

There is no one correct way of analyzing qualitative data, it is essential that qualitative researchers provide a detailed description of the procedures, decision criteria, and data manipulation that allow them to present the final results of a study (Cote, 1993). The methodological approach of the phenomenological investigation for this study has been adopted

from Smith, Flowes, Larkin (2001), Czech, Wrisberg, Fisher, Thompson, Hayes (2001) and Patton (2002) as outlined below:

1. Approaching the interviews
  - Transcribing the interview*
  - Obtaining a grasp of the interview*
2. Focusing the data
  - Bracketing the data*
3. Phenomenological reduction
  - Eliminating irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping data*
  - Verifying the elimination of the data*
4. Releasing meanings
  - Forming categories*
  - Identifying the themes*
  - Describing the themes*

#### *Approaching the Interview*

Transcribing. All interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim to create text for analysis. The primary researcher will transcribe the interviews. After completion of the transcripts, and checking for verbatim accuracy, the digital recordings will be permanently deleted. The participant will be sent a copy of the written transcripts to check for accuracy of the digitally recorded interview. To maintain the accuracy of the data and to avoid any inappropriate analysis, it is important to acquire a verbatim text of the recorded interview (Patton, 2002).

Obtaining a Grasp of the Interview. A process of listening and reading, then relistening and rereading allows the researcher to gain full grasp of the experience. This process is referred to as obtaining a holistic grasp of the data (Czech et al., 2001). Checking for inconsistencies will assist in retaining the wholeness of the data.



### *Focusing the data*

Bracketing the Data. As the researcher, one must dismiss preconceptions and notions that may interfere with the phenomena (Czech, et al., 2001). The data collected will be analyzed with the phenomena in question. It is important that the researcher brackets out the world and presupposition to identify data in pure form (Patton, 2002). Once completed, the data can be spread equally, treated with equal value, and the text analyzed with equal weight (Patton, 2002).

### *Phenomenological Reduction*

Eliminating irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping data. It is not unusual for conversations to contain brief utterances and false starts, which are nonessential to the data (Czech, et. al., 2001). Omitting the nonessentials from the process of analyzing does not affect the richness of the data, however it enhances the readability of the text (Czech, et. al, 2001).

Verifying the elimination of the data. After the transcripts are edited and irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping is removed, the transcripts will be sent to the participants for accuracy. This step is important because it encourages a truthful experience of the phenomena being captured.

### *Releasing Meanings*

Forming categories. Based on the similar themes that emerge, those data will be placed into meaningful clusters. The primary investigator and the research team will place phrases that are similar into clusters. Thereafter, clusters will be compared and categories will be formed.

Identifying the themes. After the categories are formed, the themes will be created. The themes that are created will be identified across interviews. Each theme identified must be in the individual process. Following the identification of themes, the themes will be analyzed

repeatedly until a consistent representation of each category is present and there are distinct differences between each category.

Describing the themes. The purpose of phenomenological method is to examine individuals' subjective experiences and understand their accounts of the processes by which they make sense of various experiences and circumstances. Patton (2002) points out that a thick; rich description of the experience is essential. Thus, the data in this current study will be presented in a clear and descriptive manner that captures the essence of the participants' experiences. This study will adopt the following recommended guidelines for presenting the data: a) focusing and balancing, and b) description and interpretation (Patton, 2002). Due to the large amount of data collected, the interview analysis must be focused and balanced to capture the experience of racial microaggressions and Black athletes.

### *Reliability*

For qualitative research, reliability is based on the assumption that data can be repeated or replicated (Patton, 2002). In addition, in order for qualitative data to be considered reliable, the participants must be trustworthy (Patton, 2002). Thus, if the description of the Black athletes experience with racial microaggressions can be shown as true, it is considered reliable. Reliability in natural science refers to the consistency of results across people and time. If results are repeatable, they are assumed to be reliable (Henderson, 1992). Goodrich (1988) has provided an interpretation of reliability in phenomenological research. Her idea is that the extent to which a description can be shown to be true to the experience would be the criterion for reliability. Consequently, fidelity to experience should be paramount throughout the entire study (Henderson, 1992). Goodrich (1988) suggests the following questions to help determine the reliability of a study: Do the descriptions capture the experience? Does the structure match the

co-participant's experience? Does the structure emerge from the data? Do others see the description? All of these questions were taken into account during the course of the current study.

### *Validity*

Validity is an important aspect of any research. Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that phenomenological research has a more general perspective on validity issues. According to him, the degree of a study's validity depends on whether a person reading the presentation experiences the description as accurate and revealing. The reader should be able to follow the process that has led to the conclusions and to accept the processes and the conclusions as valid. By answering the following questions, the reader may be able to find validity:

- Does this description give an accurate picture of the common features and the structural connections that are evident in the examples, which have been collected?
  - Did the interviewer influence the contents of the descriptions to the extent that the actual experience is not truly reflected?
  - Are transcriptions accurate?
  - Were conclusions other than those offered by the researcher possible in the analysis?
- Have any alternatives been identified and discussed for suitability?
- Do the specific contents and connections in the transcripts provide evidence for structural description?
  - Is the structural description specific to one situation, or does it hold for other situations?

The careful phenomenological researcher approaches a study with checks for validity and reliability throughout the process of arriving at the structural description.

The degree of this study's validity is based on the reader's ability to experience the descriptions as truthful (Czech et. al, 2001). Whether the reader agrees with the researcher or not, they should be able to follow the process that led to the conclusion of analysis (Czech et. al, 2001; Dale, 1996). Triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Patton, 2002). It will be accomplished in this study by member checks, which allows the participants access to the transcripts for accuracy. It will be accomplished with a research team to offer a series of outside perspectives on the data. In addition, the NVivo software coding analysis program will be utilized to ensure rich descriptions of the participants experience are found. The completed bracketing interview acts as another form of triangulation by highlighting the primary investigator's presuppositions and biases. Lastly, observations and journaling will be utilized as a form of triangulation.

### *Triangulation*

This study will entail methods of triangulation to enhance the analysis of the data collected from the participants. Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. Triangulation involves testing for points of consistency throughout data collection (Patton, 2002). In this study, it will be important to investigate multiple avenues of the same phenomenon to ensure a rich filled data. Prior literature highlights the importance of triangulation methods by pointing out research bias, testing the strength of interview protocol, and gaining more than one perspective in data analysis (Maxwell, 1996; Patton, p. 107, 2002).

## CHAPTER IV

## FINDINGS

Data generated from the audiotaped interviews were analyzed from a qualitative research procedure referred to as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Table 1 provides a description of the participants. All participants were currently participating for a NCAA Division-I team. The sample in this study emerged from a mid-size university in the southeastern region of the United States.

Table 1

*Description of Participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Gender	Yr. In School	Sport	Position
Veronica	20	Black/A.A.	Female	Junior	Women's Tennis	--
Charles	23	Black/A.A.	Male	Senior	Football	Defensive Line
Brittany	19	Black/A.A.	Female	Soph.	Women's Basketball	Forward
Keyshia	22	Black/A.A.	Female	Senior	Track and Field	Sprint/Jumps
Betty White	18	Black/A.A.	Female	Freshmen	Track and Field	Distance
Parker	19	Black/A.A.	Female	Junior	Volleyball	Outside Hitter
Wilson	20	Black/A.A.	Male	Junior	Football	Running Back
AJ	23	Black/A.A.	Male	Senior	Football	Cornerback
Tyrese	20	Black/A.A.	Male	Junior	Football	Linebacker

*Note.* The dash (--) represents no position assigned based on the type of sport.

The data analysis resulted in the identification of eight primary themes that emerged from Black student-athletes' accounts and experiences of racial microaggressions. Table 2 provides a list of the emergent themes. Several of the themes are interconnected to some degree. In the following sections, each theme is described accompanied by specific examples of racial microaggressions using direct quotes from the interview transcripts.

Table 2

*Emergent Themes (n = # of participants)*


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Ascription of Intelligence (n=8)
Assumed Superiority of White Cultural Values/Communication Style (n=8)
Exoticism of Black Athletes (n=7)
Second Class Citizen (n=6)
Assumed Universality (n=6)
Denial of Individual Racism (n=5)
Coping (n=9)
Underdeveloped Incidents/Unclassifiable Findings (n=8)

*Theme 1: Ascription of Intelligence/Status*

This theme refers to microaggressions that assume Black athletes to be intellectually inferior or assigned a type of status based on their race. Most of the Black athletes' (n=8) indicated that they had experienced feelings of being assigned a negative intelligence or being deemed as inarticulate. These participants reported feeling that the campus at large, professors, coaches, and teammates, specifically Whites, questioned or labeled their intelligence because of their race. Both male and female participants described negative statements surrounding the microaggressor. The data for this theme is organized and presented in a manner by statements the participants used because they would often describe the theme in several parts of the interview.

AJ

“As far as the coaches that I’ve had, Black people get more slack and that’s just because I guess we’re expected to be more athletic or maybe it might be from proof.”

Betty White

“I work at Abercrombie & Fitch and that is like a known “White store” but I feel that because it’s a known white store, [they] try to hire more Black people... It’s Affirmative Action. [they] look at it as we have to help them. But I don’t think we need as much help.”

Brittany

“it’s like I’m not dumb and I’m not a jock I guess, but I guess people look at it just like the high school thing you can skip class whenever you want to and it’s not that way. You have people who actually push you and on your back about every 5 minutes trying to keep you in the classroom”

Keyshia

“I guess some of the slang. [they] look...I would say disgusted. [They] look at us as being ignorant or not educated. You know, not as professional.”

“Normally people stereotype Black athletes as being dumb and teacher pets and they can’t pass the class unless the teacher help them pass the class and I don’t fall into that category at all.”

“some Black athletes, I’m not gonna say all of them ...they are portrayed as being I guess as I mentioned earlier, they are not as intelligent as other students on campus. I know that for a fact. Like, I’ve seen people facial expressions in classrooms like when an athlete is asked a question...[They] be like “He is so stupid and so dumb” or “She is so stupid and she so dumb.”

Parker

“like maybe black people aren’t as smart as white people or whatever. And I can see how people go in, like when I see people go in somewhere and meet somebody or meet someone new [they] might have that conceived notion but like I try hard to like... I don’t know, to like deteriorate that. Like show them that yea I can be smarter or better or just as good as you.”

Tyrese

“the last coach I had, I don’t think he believed a Black athlete could get the job down because of the mental aspect of the game. Unless he is just your best option...your clear cut best option and your best athlete then depending on the kind of coach you have he may lean towards one guy over another because of his color. At least that’s what everybody is going to think anyway.”

“Sometimes a teacher expect for you to be a little bit less capable than what you actually are...You can get the sense sometimes when you talk to a teacher that she doesn’t expect for you to catch on as easily or she just feels like you may be less capable to understand what’s going on. I’m not so sure that it’s a race thing as much as a football thing but it may be both.”

Veronica

“[they’ll]’ll always say, “You are not like most Black people Veronica...so people will always say that to me. “You’re different from such and such person” or “how come you don’t act like this person or those types of things...So I think that because people think that about me, [they] are less apt to say racist things about me because [they] think that I am the exception when really [they] just don’t know the other [Black] people”

“We all have the same intellect and all that other stuff but [they] just think that I’m different when that’s really not the case.”

“A lot of the girls on my team have money and so when I got here I remember one of the girls was like “Yeah we assumed that you were really rich.” [They] didn’t think I was inferior, [they] thought that I was the superior Black person with all of this money.”

“my money does come up every so often and I don’t know whether it is to figure out where I stand on the scale you know, but I know um, like I took one of my teammates to my house and I’m pretty sure when she came back that some of the girls was like, what’s her house like... was it really big? Nice? Or what kind of neighborhood is it in. I’m sure like she was grilled for questions; I’m almost a 100% positive.”

“When I came to Georgia Southern actually my coach before I got here told my dad I really want an African American on my team because I’ve never had an African American girl on blah, blah, blah. My dad thought that was really weird and was like, Why would she say that, even if she never you know. Why would she recruit you for your color she should be saying I really want an athlete like [Veronica] you know, one that’s fast. One that’s this, one that’s that. But I guess she kind of slipped up to my dad and it was like I really want an athlete, like an African American athlete so you would be great for our team and blah blah blah she shouldn’t have said that, kind of thing. Cuz people want to be accepted because of not by default.”

“I don’t really think it’s a secret that a lot of people don’t think Black people are really smart. Like, that’s what I’ve come to find because like, when I got into college. I had a 4.0. White people on my team who probably didn’t think that I would be that good of a student when I say the same thing, [they’re]’re like oh my gosh, you’re really smart [Veronica]. And I’m like you have a 4.0 too. It’s like you know, I know I’m smart.”

Wilson

“I think the teachers look at us, look at black athletes more as pushovers because I guess [they] think we just come to class without doing work...I don’t think there’s any racial discrimination going on in the classroom besides them looking down on us as we being black and we’re not as smart as the white kids.”

“Um, it’s basically feel like we’ll come to class and just sit there and won’t do work and expect them to give us a grade without doing anything and expect that the coaches will just come in there and say anything to them and have them alter our grade to give us the grade we need to play, but it’s not truly that way because even though [they] may give us grades we still have to do the work just like everybody else. So I feel like [they] still feel like we just come to class just to be coming. And we come to school just to play sports. And we’re not. Basically we’re here for the classroom. That’s why I say [they] call us pushovers.”



“I feel like a lot of teachers look down on athletes because of that stereotype that we just come to school to play sports and I don’t think [they] really are willing to give us the help as we need as if a regular student came up to them and asked for help. I feel like their willing to help them more than their willing to help an athlete.”

*Theme 2: Assumed Superiority of White Cultural Values/Communication Style*

Nearly all of the participants (n=8) discussed incidents in which Black cultural values and communication styles were devalued or deemed inferior while the superiority of White values and communication styles were upheld. A sub-theme of *White Standards of Beauty*, particularly around hair emerged as well. The participants stated:

AJ

“Um, Okay. I would say...I would say that would be when I came to college as far as picking a major. I know I came into education and a lot of my fellow classmates asked me like after you graduate, what are you going to do. I was like I’m going to try to go pro. [They] were like you’re not going to teach? And I was like, yea Imma teach eventually, but it’s still one of my dreams. So I guess [they] kind of took offense to that you know because [they’ve]’ve been wanting to teach all [they] lives and I kind of made that decision when I got to college, so [they] was like you know I don’t feel like you deserve being a teacher, you don’t want this bad enough. I want it just like I want it like you. I have other goals I want to get to first. I don’t know. I felt like [they] kind of took it the wrong way, but I mean I looked at it as their opinion.”

Brittany

“I mean, it makes me feel like why do I have to talk White, why can’t I just talk with sense or somebody else where somebody else can actually understand what I am saying. It’s not that I’m talking White, I’m talking I don’t want to say right, I’m just talking with pronunciation that’s all...Like talking actually using a subject verb and predicate. Actually making sense... You know, I don’t know really how to explain it. It’s like speaking so someone else doesn’t have to be like what?! What did you say? Slow down your talking. You annunciate every word in every sentence or whatever you’re trying to say.”

Charles

“I didn’t appreciate it and nor did any of my teammates, which is what we told our coach that we didn’t appreciate it. But, as he let us know... that’s their establishment, their rules, so you have to abide by their rules, so it was really nothing I could really do about it”

“Uh, sometimes I’ve been, I’ve been singled out because I mumble... because of my Southern accent. I use to play football in Kansas, I transferred here from Kansas. And me being from Georgia having the down south lingo, slang or what not, people use to say

that [they] couldn't understand me how people down south couldn't talk, that we were illiterate and I didn't appreciate that either because I feel like we in the same classroom, we're in the same school.. so if I'm illiterate what does that make you."

"Our coaches didn't, [they] didn't get involved like that. I think the white teammates were trying to be funny about it, but I didn't take it as being funny. I didn't appreciate it at all."

Keyshia

"Umm, I've seen facial expressions. Like when African Americans or Blacks talk to each other, I've seen different races look like, "Why are they talking like that?" Like they may say "shawty" or something like that. Like "shorty"...Just little stuff like that but nothing major."

Parker

"Just like maybe when I was younger how I would eat cuz my mom side of the family they would cook us dinner and I would eat soul food or whatever. And I took a friend along and [they] didn't know anything about it like greens, whatever else we were eating. [They] thought I was like pretty weird."

"Like as I was going through life, I'm like hanging out say I'm going to the mall or something... well, like in Elementary school, I would be cool like with everybody but predominantly white or whatever. But randomly [they] would like say stuff like it doesn't matter because you're like Black... or you're Black so it doesn't mean you're as good as me or whatever."

Tyrese

"Umm, sometimes there are jokes made. This is between teammates and not so much myself as much as my other teammates who talk a little bit more, with a stronger. I guess the word I'm looking for is stronger or hood tone to it or use certain words like "trap" or "loud" or things that [they] wouldn't you know like...One of our teammates he is a lineman, a White lineman and he'll always make fun of one of my teammates because before the games we'll be in the locker room listening to music and my teammate will say "Let that shit ride cuz" and he'll say it like he's being serious like "Like that shit ride" you know or I like this song, or change this song. So, one of the other teammates, a lineman who is White he will just make fun of it and it became an ongoing joke by saying it too like "Let this shit ride cuz." I mean, some people may feel like I talk funny but I don't think so. As far as Black athletes on my team and on teams that I've been on, there's a difference in the way we communicate. Some people have real clear accents, some people are real country, Black or White, and some just have that...you can tell that where they are from such as the suburbs."

"So, when you first come in at the beginning of the season or before spring or before camp and you sit down and you have those talks, team meetings...you just talk about how we're all one team, one unit, we all have to believe in one common goal and things like race go out the door. Religion sometimes because we pray or say the lord's prayer

that's suppose to go out, I mean...where all suppose to be a part of one family. Those things shouldn't really come into play. It should all be about football."

Veronica

"Well, when I was younger also my mom used to braid my hair and when I would go to tennis practice I remember my coaches making fun of it to me and my sister like you guys got those ghetto braids in your hair and blah, blah, blah and would laugh at us. I remember one time [they] did that and I was probably like in early middle school-or something like that- and I actually did feel really bad and I didn't want my mom to braid my hair anymore."

Wilson

"[They] had a commercial going for the school and a certain, a lot of players had tried out because the commercial through the school you have to be validated before you do anything outside of school policy and a couple of guys got turned down because they spoke slang real bad and [they] didn't want that. I felt like that was kind of racist. People coming from the South who haven't been talked to speak properly compared to the people who have been taught."

"Well the guys that tried out for the interview were told that they didn't speak well enough in the interview as the other guys so they basically were excluded from the commercial. It was like 5 Black guys, 5 white guys and only one Black person made it and all 5 of the white guys made it. I felt that the guys who didn't make it, they were from Florida, which all Floridians all have this accent of how they talk. [They] I guess the people who were over the commercial didn't want any slang in their videos, in their commercial so [they] didn't allow them to do it."

*Subtheme: White Standards of Beauty*

Brittany

"But it's mostly about like hair, like how come you don't wash, ya'll don't wash it or how come... like you can put like weave or extensions in it and just different stuff like that. That's what [they] really always ask. And we always ask them about why ya'll wash ya'll hair everyday going to get dressed why you have to wash it every day. Well if we don't wash it then it will get oily. Well don't you want oil because for our hair that's what helps it grow so it's like kind of the opposite for us I guess...There's conversations about everything but mostly about the black verses white it's about the hair. Everything else I guess is normal between the females."

"Well, like my teammates, like [they] always like my white teammates always ask us about our hair or like why we don't wash it every day and like why we get tan like when we go outside for like 30 minutes I have like a tan coming back in."

Keyshia

"Well, I guess I could comment on when it comes to hair in track. You have girls with the pretty curly hair, umm...you have the nappy hair, and you have the so-so hair. So it's a

lot of different hair types and it also goes with skin complexion. The light skin girls are suppose to have the pretty curly longhair where as the dark skinned girls are suppose to have the short nappy hair.'

"Umm, I guess for the long hair the flow more, bouncy, the light skin girls (tape goes out)...If you are a dark skin girl and it's flowing [they] think that you have weave. When [they] see dark skin girls with short and nappy air, [they] think she can run because [they] think she is harder and ratchet."

Tyrese

"I excelled in football and baseball and eventually just weeded off baseball because actually I got into it with one of my coaches in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade I played baseball and it was a white coach. Actually, when I think about it was racism in that situation too. As far as, [they] wouldn't let my friend play because his hair was a certain length. He had hair down to his back and [they] said he had to cut his hair in order to be on the baseball team. Now what hair and baseball has in common...I don't know. Like why someone can't play baseball because of the length of your hair, I don't know. But everybody assumed it was because he was Black and the whole team was White and me and him were the only two people that were Black. So we both just quit playing after that."

"Well, I played 9<sup>th</sup> grade baseball and I was on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade team. I wasn't on the varsity team. My sophomore year I played JV and I was looking to move up to varsity in the middle of the season just to be a part of the team. My friend was a good enough and a year younger than me to actually make the varsity team after tryouts. Cause you know when the season begins you have your tryouts...But [they] told him in order for him to be on the team he had to cut his hair. That was the stipulation. Like, it was clear-cut. [they] didn't beat around the bush. It was he couldn't be on the team unless he cut his hair."

"Why does he have to cut his hair to play baseball? Coach Champitto a White man, has an all White roster of players and you're telling me now that some coloreds want to get on the team and he has to cut his hair. That don't even make sense. Now that I think about it, it was one other Black guy on the team. He was real good though; he was real good...a center fielder and he had a short cut. But I mean, as fat as I could remember it was just ridiculous. It got to the point where he didn't cut his hair and we both just quit baseball and just stuck to football and we did that for the rest of high school."

Veronica

"Well, actually one of my teammates did say something really derogatory to me once...we were in the van on the way to a tournament and she was like umm, I leaned over to get something...and umm, she goes "Eww, Melanie your hair is touching me!" And, I was like "And so..." She's like "Your hair is different". I was like "Okay, my hair is different from yours, which is different from Kristy's, which is different from Christine's and you're just realizing that now." I was like "You act like you never touched my hair before or that you've never seen my hair before" And she's like "It's just different..." I was like "Okay."

“a lot of White people think that I am different than Black people because I talk differently...[they] always wonder why my hair is long...like there's other Black people that speak differently than me that have really long hair, longer hair than my hair”

“You know? So it's kind of like turned me from wanting to get a weave because it has turned to like we're so glad you so don't have a weave and I'm like but I kind of want a weave you know what I mean. But like, so I guess it's one thing I wouldn't do so I wouldn't come on or it would be like, like you know [they] go back a be like (whispers) She put that weave in her hair.”

Wilson

“[They] won't let people with dreads in and like that type of stuff.”

### *Theme 3: Exoticism of Black Athletes*

A third theme found among the participants (n=7) was the exoticism of Black athletes.

The participants recalled instances that occurred where one objectified their physical appearance, features, or skills based on their race. The following accounts were described by the participants:

AJ

“Most white guys, I have a lot of white friends and we joke around and we workout and stuff. We try to get big, we try to get abs and everything. [They're] like, dang [AJ] I wish I could get cut. [They] be like that's because he's Black. Black people look cuter than white people. [They] really do. Most of the times they say that.”

Betty White

“Well maybe like you know, “oh you must be fast...” Why must I be fast? Is it because I'm black?”

Charles

“Uh yea. I've been assumed I was an athlete because of my race and also because of my stature. People always ask me you must play football, and I'm like yea...and “I can tell.”

Parker

“Well, just like growing up, Um. People make like jokes, you know. Like, like why is somebody, like why are you so tall. I'm not like a tall, tall girl. But [They're] like, why are you so tall? And somebody be like because she's a negro. And I'm like okay, good one. Just like random little comments like that. Just like Black jokes and like... I don't know.”

“I just think this is really funny because I remember like the other day, cuz like we had a recruit in and we were going to hit and the lady's like oh my gosh you jump so high. And I'm like I don't even think I jump real high. I just thought I was being normal... There's

like other girls doing the same things as me, so she just commented on high I jump. Okay thanks. It was funny, I'm like but I'm not the highest one that jumps on the team so... I don't know. I just thought it was funny"

Tyrese

"Yeah, I can say so but then I can't say that it's not because of my build or anything else."

"It would be more likely for someone to assume a Black person is an athlete just because of stereotypes and what you see in the media and movies... Things of that nature. Umm, seeing a big Black guy someone may think he must be a football player or tall Black guy and say you must be a basketball player. As opposed to a tall White guy who may not be athletic at all and he just may be tall. If so, I think it would be slightly easier for people to assume that Black people are athletes over White people."

"(Laughter) Umm, being in the showers, I mean I shouldn't have to say too much more about that but ya know the White boys... being in the shower completely naked amongst the team... open showers... communal showers... just the stereotype about the size of your penis compared to a White man. Those things are talked about and joked about. Then you move on. Umm, it's plenty of stereotypes that for the most part they all come through subtly and not in a violent or aggressive way for most situations."

Veronica

"because I play tennis which is an obviously a white sport there are not a lot of Black people that play tennis. Like, a lot of people might just look at me differently since I'm the only Black person on the team. And like, everyone always assumes that I come from like a different place from other Black people. But, I mean, besides always being called Venus and Serena which are the only two other Black tennis players in the professional tennis world, not that I can really recall."

"See my teammates, because [they] have never really been around like a Black person in general. Like a lot of them have never had a Black friend that's really close to them."

"Because if were a white girl walking around like I am or an Asian girl or an Indian girl, I doubt if people would be asking me if I played basketball. Even if my legs were the size as they are and I had the same built, so."

Wilson

"It was actually funny because I walked into the financial aid office about three weeks ago and the lady was like you must be an athlete because I can tell by your physique."

#### *Theme 4: Second Class Citizen*

Being perceived and treated as a lesser being was a frequent microaggressive theme experienced by the participants (n=6). This occurred when Black athletes felt as though they

received differential treatment from White people at local establishments, the classroom and sport.

Betty White

“the cross country girls are White people, so I think that they kind of block themselves off and I think there were maybe like 3 or 4 Black girls on our team and I found out like maybe later on they were having a Cross Country Christmas party. None of the Black girls were invited. It was just all White people and they kind of just blocked themselves off from the rest of the track team and I think that’s kind of racist”

“If I feel like awkward, because I’m very jokingly but I’ll be really serious. I’m just like [they’ll]’ll say something and I’ll be in a group, obviously a majority white school so if I’m like in a group and it’s usually all White, I’m usually like, “Is it because I’m black”. And [they’re]’re like “hahahaha, no, no” you know. But I sometimes fell like it’s because I’m Black.”

“I don’t want them to feel like I think [they] are being racist, I’m just going to joke about it.”

“I think that it’s not a very fair sport [cheerleading] because the moms’ control it more than the coach and it tends to be more white moms...I did it for 5 years. I started in the front and slowly moved to the back the older I got because parents are more involved”

Charles

“I know that like around, around campus and some of the establishments around campus Black athletes are kind of targeted. Um, like Rudy’s. One night me and a couple of my friends were at [local establishment] they were getting ready to close and they told like everybody to get out and whatever, so we were starting to get out and when we looked back, and all the African Americans were out but there were still some White people in there. I felt like it wasn’t necessary and we were targeted. I felt like we were kind back in the Civil Rights days because of the way we were targeted.”

“At the time I felt I was enraged because I felt like I was being targeted or singled out because of my, which I can do nothing about. I wasn’t bothering anybody, I wasn’t causing no trouble. I was just trying to enjoy myself.”

“I kind of felt like that but in the instance where we were talking about in the [bar] I kind of felt like that, like we were below them because [they] were the owners of the establishment and we were just students. I felt like [they] felt like we were trying to get what they had which really that doesn’t faze me because I can do without going there.”

“Well, sometimes we’d be in the locker room or whatever, whatever and it would be black people against white people or whatever and [they] would be like ya’ll kinds not wanted around here or whatever, whatever and then the black people would respond well it’s 2010 and we got a black president now so we can do whatever we want to do and

then the white people would respond back by saying well it's about time ya'll got a black president and uh, and we'll just laugh"

"it's time and I'm just sitting around thinking about it, thinking, What if [they] were serious. What if [they] were really trying to make us feel they were above us, but then again I realize that they weren't so I just let it go."

Parker

"we were at like Sav-not Savannah, yea, in Savannah. This was like a recent thing and I remember like a group coming in just as big as ours and like um, but like I was like the only black girl with like the group. But like the other group had no black people or whatever. But like [they] got their food way faster than we did, it was like a smaller joint. I guess [they] got their food way faster than we did and like they were like, I don't know, done almost by the time we had got ours and I'm like, "What's going on?" So maybe, and like, it was... I don't know."

"Cuz like, I remember when I first went to school [they] would be like oh she's the Black girl, don't want to be friends with her. Or she's not as cool as us but after like I had to grow up with them and stuff like that I was like basically just like them. So it's just like [they] understood more, so..."

Tyrese

"Because the most that I can recall right now, as far as racism that I've experienced through football has been through subtle signs of racism with my coaches. Things like, we will be all sitting in the field house waiting for practice to start and the coach, our position coach will walk in and be like "Hey boys" or something like that, just subtle. Recently, what I can remember, we went over his house one time and we were making burgers and he was like "I know y'all boys want some onions" ...And we all kind of looked at each other and laughed like, "Naw we don't eat onions coach, we don't like onions" But, blatant discrimination, I can't say so...not recently."

"One of my teammates, he doesn't like when a coach call him boy, especially a white coach. So it kind of became like a joke, but we would just kind of keep notice whenever he would come into a meeting room and refer to us as boys and he actually told him "Don't call me a boy." And that's just like for a White man to call a group of mostly Black athletes boys is kind of... it can be made a joke...but it's kind of just...I don't think he mean anything by it but...I think it's a subtle signed of hidden racism in there somewhere...probably not blatant."

"The fact that it's demeaning to the point where it's almost...I am man and you're a man, we could communicate on the same level. I understand that you have a sense of authority over me because you're my coach but I'm not your boy. That's a term you hear used in a movie like Rosewood, or one of those old slavery movies or something like that. A White man rode up and then refers to a bunch or group of Black men as boys. So it just seem racist...that's what I think of when I hear boy."



“not necessarily just from the coaches but from other players on the team sometimes we’ll have that kind of tension. I can recall not that long ago when Obama was running for the presidency...Not necessarily like a term being used but just blatant disrespect for the fact that he was a man like... to the point where some players would make comments like I wouldn’t vote for him just because his last name is Obama...It sounds too close to Osama...that was kind of like ok, well, so basically what I’m hearing is that you’re not going to vote for him because he’s Black. If you say that I’m not going to vote for him because of his last name.”

“Like, we run this offense...our coach doesn’t want a Black quarterback. So all of our Black quarterbacks aren’t going to play or not going to start because we know coach favorite player is this guy. Not saying that he’s not the best but he’s also a White boy. Everybody knows on the team who the coach’s favorites are. Ya know, we know those certain players that he talks to a little bit more, laughs with a little bit more, looks out for them a little bit more than rest of the team and they all happen to be White because my head coach is White.”

“So, when I say tucked away I just mean those things that everybody notices but you really can’t say for sure. You can’t really prove it or put your finger on it. So some people may have a subtle advantage because of it.”

“His position coach was White; his head coach is White, maybe that had something to do with it. It doesn’t make sense to me cause I know these guys and I’m just being real and honest. I’m not trying to fool myself...I know that there is true competition here and in football it should also be open competition. Nobody’s job should ever be safe but why is it when he messes up and fumbles, you don’t take him out the game but when someone else does get an actual shot the first mistake they make they end up getting pulled. That happened a lot this last season. Ya know what I mean, what can you do? Like our last coach said, he can control two things for sure, “scholarship money and playing time.” He is going to put out who he wants to play.”

Veronica

“My grandfather was Black. But he could never take tennis lessons because if you were black in the 1940s and 50s you’re not playing tennis for any country clubs, you know. You’re the ball boy and that’s exactly what he was, the ball boy. But he taught himself to play and he taught my sister and I to play so that’s how we ended up playing tennis.”

Wilson

“Yea. In the clubs. In the local bars around here. [They] don’t really care for athletes as much as I would think they should, because this is an athletic based school, but at [blank] a couple of weeks ago, couple of guys from the team went up there and [they] only let the white guys in. [They] didn’t let no black guys in. And [they] did that for like 2 weeks straight where they wouldn’t let no black people in. And then like they finally start to let

us in but then they started picking out like, like nitpicking against small things like clothes.”

“my freshman year... Our recent head coach, he wouldn’t play people of color really. He played people who had been here, but if you were new to the team you weren’t going to play. So I think that was probably the biggest thing I witnessed so far at this school in a racial wise... Basically he had said he had favorites and he was going to play who had wanted to play, and a lot of his favorites are white guys so it was kind of... he didn’t just state that he wasn’t going to play black people but we know from the people that were playing because we had a lot of black players that should have been playing but wasn’t.”

“I think when the coaches, certain coaches call you boy. [They] only call black people boy but they call the white guys by their first name, by their last name. But [they] call us Boy. They need you to directly do something and they’ll be like “boy” do this. But then they’ll say “Adam” to this to a white guy. So I think they can be very racist towards us to.”

“Because I feel like the respect that he was giving the white kids by calling them by their first name, I feel like he should have gave each of us that same respect and not call us by boy or any other name besides our first name or our last name? I feel like it’s trying to degrade a black person’s overall character because back in the day the white man always called us boy most of the times when they wanted you to do something. And I feel like that’s very disrespectful now to call someone boy when they’re showing you all types of respect and you expect the same thing in return.”

“Most of our schools football team money comes from is from the boosters and a lot of kids a lot of the players parents are boosters so [they’re]’re going to expect their kids to be playing regardless of their talents. And with them giving money to the school and sometimes to the coaches they have no choice so they have to basically do what the booster’s say. But the booster’s do play a big part of the field.”

“It would be I guess from the situation coming back to the situation when people used to call each other boy. I guess a lot of people take that offensive like you calling me boy you own me and that started a lot of fights and I guess people used to do it for no reason.”

“at first the coaches weren’t doing anything about it until things started missing from white kids’ lockers and then they put cameras and stuff in the locker room, which I think you’re not supposed to do that cuz that’s invasion of privacy but no one ever said anything about it. Just kind of went as it was.”

“So cuz like, I know, my freshman year, a guy had an internship... a black guy had an internship and he was kicked off the team because he didn’t complete Summer workouts. And there were two other white kids with internships and nothing happened”

“There was a lot of racism going on the team where [they] felt that these white kids were kind of more prominent of doing things better than black kids, but I don’t think that’s true.”

“In high school I tried out for the baseball team, and we had a white coach and he told me to run track. That’s probably what drew me away from baseball. And that year, our whole baseball team was White...It was funny because basically we had drills. And I played outfield when I was playing rec-ball. And he had me at second base and I wasn’t stopping the ball. But when we did base running, he seen that I could run so basically he was like since you can really field the ground well, maybe you should run track. I kind of took that offensive because there was a bunch of guys out there that wasn’t doing well, but the white guys stayed on the team. I was the only guy told to run track and I was the only black guy to try out for the team that year. So I kind of took that offensive.”

“I speak to people as I walk by and I speak to people and a lot of people just turn their heads. A lot of white folks will turn their head when I speak to them and won’t respond to me... I guess a lot of white people feel we shouldn’t be down here, so [they] still gone feel like they can be whichever way towards you as they feel like.”

“last year when we had our old coach, our drug testing policy was like if you failed two drug tests, you were suspended for the season. We had one black guy that failed one drug test and he kicked him off the team. And we had three white guys, two was caught with possession of marijuana and one tested positive for it and [they] only suspended them for two games. So I thought that was racist and that was very, very discriminative against black people because this one guy failed his drug test once and getting kicked off the team indefinitely when you have two guys get caught with possession and one guy fail his test and they all get suspended for two games, I didn’t think that was right at all.”

I felt like he was treating people... he had different standards set for different people. Like, I guess, he was giving the white people more leeway than he was giving the black people because with his one incident he was gone and these other three guys basically had the same incident and they were still on the team. I don’t feel like he treated everybody with the same... I guess he didn’t punish everybody the same way he should have. But he always said in order to be fair you have to punish people differently. But for that same crime or mistake they did I guess they all should have been punished the same but they wasn’t.”

#### *Theme 5: Assumed Universality*

Some participants (n=6) reported instances in which statements were made that indicated Blacks were no different from other people in their race.

AJ

“[AJ] The reason why you’re so cut is because you’re Black. Reason why you’re fast is because you’re Black. Them are the most two that I hear.”

Betty White

“I feel like [they] look at us like everyone’s from the ghetto and we live in projects. But then we have White people who are basically from the same area except they’re in their own you know class system I guess.”

“like most people think for instance Black people have attitudes all the time and don’t want to do anything and you know if you look at TV shows like “Family Guy” and “South Park” you see the stereotypes.”

“Or do I like chicken? Who doesn’t like chicken? Chicken is like a universal... chicken is a universal food... I remember one time I said I didn’t like something... Oh! I don’t like chitterlings. And [they] were like What?! You don’t like chitterlings. Do I have to like chitterlings because I’m Black? You know?”

“Or people ask me do I play basketball or something, I think it’s because I’m Black because black people are known to be really good at basketball and stuff. And I’m actually really bad at it... Maybe [they] assume because I’m Black I must be athletic and I think that’s a typical stereotype.”

Parker

“Definitely. I definitely see how people might become uncomfortable or like think that when they see me they might think that I’m like loud or like I don’t know like sassy or something and so I’m like, nooo...”

Tyrese

“Well I mean, on the football team we eat together a lot. Those are easy to pick up on. When we go to [blank] we have fried chicken... “I bet y’all boys like that fried chicken.” We use to have it where we had watermelon every Wednesday, “I bet y’all not going to pass up on the watermelon.”

Veronica

“Well, I know that [they] only call me that because I’m Black because otherwise [they] would call me Maria Sharpovick. I mean, who knows, our back hands could be the same but because Venus and Serena are my color, that’s what [they] call me although I look nothing like them.”

“Yea, it’s just a bunch of assumptions... my team’s like how come you don’t wear weave in your hair... you have real hair! Honestly you want a weave but now I’m scared to get a weave because if I come to school or tennis practice with a weave, [they’re]’re going to be like now you have that weave in your hair”

“It’s usually about my hair. [they’ll]’ll be like, did you dye your hair. Cuz my hair is kind of light and I’m like no I don’t dye my hair like and I’ve even had people straight up tell

me that I'm lying in that department. You died your hair! Why are you lying to us. Why don't you just tell us you dyed it cuz you know cuz a lot of black people have darker hair. I'm like, I didn't die my hair. If I dyed my hair, I would tell you I dyed my hair. Like... it doesn't matter. Why can't we just leave it at that. Would it make you feel better because that's not the case."

Wilson

"I've been told, since you're Black you probably can run fast. Since you're Black there's probably certain food you eat, certain things you drink, that you do. I guess [they] categorize all the things normal white kids would do and they put that in one category and if it's not normal for white kids to do it, they put it in the black kids category."

"Like there's certain things that's common for a black person, more than like a person would put you into that category instead of branching out and basically and thinking of other things you could possible do, they'll just delete all those things and think about those particular things that normal black people do on a regular basis and they'll stick you with that type stuff."

#### *Theme 6: Denial of Individual Racism*

Over half of the participants (n=5) described experiences and statements that indicated where a White person did not want to acknowledge race or biased comments were made.

Betty White

"I feel like people go out of their way to make you feel like you're not being put out against. Unless [they're] being blatantly obviously trying to like separate you or something like that. I just feel that people go out of their way to make you feel that "oh we're not racist"."

Brittany

"So it's like [they] were on our side but then they didn't also didn't know what to do because then they would look bad like you're a traitor so they really took like you know just tried to calm everyone down but never really took sides you know like fall for this side or fall for that side. [They] just kind of just tried to settle everything out because they really couldn't take sides because they would be looked at either a traitor to their color or be a traitor to their team, the team that they were coaching. So I mean they had to, they had their ups and downs about it."

Keyshia

"Umm, I would probably be mean about it. I'm kind of blunt. I would just tell them to look back through all the stuff we've been through with history. I would say it still exists. I would probably throw it in their face and say that it still exists."

Veronica

"I mean, I know like when that girl Molly said that to me she doesn't mean it. She doesn't know what she's talking about but that doesn't excuse what people say to you."

You know what I mean? And a lot of time we have friends that say inappropriate things it's easy to be like, come on, you know she doesn't mean it. But, is it, but how do you know she doesn't mean it?"

"that pretty much like invalidates my feelings when someone says I mean I'm sure she doesn't mean it like that. Because they're some people that come up to me like I'm sure she doesn't mean it like that."

Wilson

"it was a lot of white people to that took offense to that on our team. As [they] were taking up for us as they were saying that was wrong, but then again it was a lot of guys that really didn't care about it. [They] laughed about it and everything, but the coaches didn't say anything."

"I felt like [they] didn't take our feelings as serious as they should have with us being on the team together and us being one. We supposed to have everybody's back and I don't feel like they did. [They]] weren't doing what they were supposed to do."

"even though slavery and all that is over, today the world is still very racist. And it shows a lot but a lot of people try to overlook it. But you can see it in sports and in everyday life. Even walking around campus you can"

### *Theme 7: Coping Strategies*

All Black athletes (n=9) in the study reported a wide range of coping strategies that they used to address the various racial microaggressions they experienced at local establishments, the classroom and their sport. The most common coping strategies they identified were (a) attempting to overlook racial microaggressions and not letting them "faze" them (n=6); using microaggressions as a form of motivation for the classroom and sport (n=5); "choosing one's battles" (i.e., making deliberate decisions about when to confront racial microaggressions; n=4); acceptance of racism (n=4); prayer as a way to cope with difficult situations (n=2); rationalization/minimizing racial microaggressions by comparing them with the civil rights era (n=1); and advocating for people of color by means of educating others (n=1). The participants stated:

AJ

“At first you get frustrated because you know you’re trying to convey your feelings to somebody else but to me, after awhile if you don’t get it I just don’t care to try anymore.”

“Don’t that just make you mad when somebody says something to you like that and I’m like, naw. People have their own opinions that can talk whatever they want to say. You’re not touching, you’re not doing any physical harm to me or anyone I love it’s... I’m not going to be mad.”

“Uh, definitely my father. Growing up he drilled into me, be humble, be slow to speak quick to hear. My dad’s real holy, been having me into church since I was born. I think that got a lot to do with it as far as how I handle stuff today.”

Betty White

“I don’t feel it [racial stereotypes and discrimination] affects my ability. I feel it makes me want to work harder to not be the typical Black person I guess everyone stereotypes.”

“Like, it’s like there’s nothing I can do about it, I mean... I’m black and I act the way I act. There’s nothing I can do about that. So, it’s just who I am.”

“But, as far as me talking proper or White, I’m not going to change that because it’s who I am and I’m not.. I’m Black and there’s nothing I can do about that so I am who I am. I have the face that I have, the skin tone, the voice and everything. So that’s all I can be.”

Brittany

“Basically I just try to overcome it by just studying more and like not only studying like when it’s time to study like in study hall but go home and study more and try to... personally, see who gets the first A in the class and I try to go pick them out and be like well people will call them like the geeks or who study harder or who like who just understands it, so I try to go study up with them and those are probably people like if it’s Math or Science”

“Yea, I like to take the time to educate others because I take my time out to listen to someone else talk of another group or another different culture. I take my timeout to wanna learn so if someone else learn, that makes the world a better place.”

Charles

“Well, initially, I was outraged, and... I wasn’t out of control, but at the same time I wasn’t under control. So as time went on and I got to thinking about it, I realized that we, this is the year 2010 and back in the 60s and 70s it was worst so I really have nothing to be mad about. Because I could have been, I could have came up in a time when it was really, you know, terrible. So, I mean, as I took all that into account, I pretty much settled down and just let it sweep underneath the rug.”

“Whenever I got the chance on the football field, whenever I got the chance to go up against someone, I just worked my hardest and tried to hurt ‘em cuz that’s the only way I

can do it without getting in trouble. See if I did it off the field, I would then have an assault charge and all that so I took it out on the football field.”

“I’m aware of the fact that I am stereotyped um, but it really doesn’t faze me in the classroom because I know what I can do and I know my intelligence and I really don’t let it faze me. Um, I mean, that’s not really a factor other than the fact I think about it from time to time but as far as my performance or that it doesn’t faze my performance in the classroom at all.”

“I mean, as I got older I realized that some stuff you just can’t control, you can’t change you shouldn’t really worry about what you can’t control, um. Growing up um, now that I look back on my life, I realize that me being me being, me playing football in the streets, make me want to keep doing it. Before I even thought about playing organized football I was doing it in the streets. Me doing that, that’s what made me want to keep doing it, keep doing it because I found it to be fun.”

Keyshia

“I was shocked because I thought it [racism] died down a little but I see that it really hasn’t. It didn’t make me mad or anything, I just shook it off and went on about my day... I just forgot about it. I didn’t let it faze me at all.”

“Yeah I don’t let them hold me down at all. I have too much to look forward to so I don’t let little things bother me. Others people ignorance doesn’t faze me at all.”

Parker

“Um... I just, it’s like whatever. It’s not that big of a deal. We got our food. It was good. I don’t know. It’s just that, it’s know that people like aren’t very understanding of stuff like that. Especially in today, I’m just like that happens.”

“I think it’s like kind of ignorant but I’m just like whatever and like I feel that when I respond to it that way they don’t get more into it or whatever. So it’s just like, yea. [They] just state their comments and I’m like alright cool, very funny and yea. So, keep going.”

Tyrese

“As far as the n-word, “nigga, nigger”... White boys in general throw it around so much that if I were to get mad every time it would be pointless.”

“Umm, and like I said, a lot of people give up on what they really want to do in life because it seems there are a set of circumstances of what they are trying to obtain is so difficult. But I feel like I can work through that... And I’m not finna let anybody or coaching staff discourage me. Ya know, I’m not finna let a group of people totally take me off track to where I want to go”

“Honestly, it doesn’t just make me mad every time someone says something stereotypical about a Black person. It doesn’t make me mad like I want to fight. Now you can say



something the wrong way and it can get testy if you say something too many times or the wrong way or...”

“I feel like I’m just struggling at times but then there’s always somebody who has it worse...It’s always someone who is struggling more. When I pray I just think about how I got clothes, shoes, food and like I said, I could have just had it worse.”

Veronica

“I mean, it made me feel bad for her because she like the type of person that you feel bad about. Like, I’m sorry that your life is like that. You know what I mean. And umm, I mean I really didn’t want to associate with her after that, you know what I mean? And honestly, until this day I really don’t associate with her that much anymore, probably umm, because it’s mostly attributed to that situation. So, I mean no one wants to be friends with someone who inadvertently says mean things you know. Who knows what else she was thinking.”

“I mean I’ve been playing tennis for like 12 years so being I become accustomed to being like the one of two Black girls, the other being my sister at Tennis tournaments like... and so, everyone like I was like the easiest person to catch an eye because I was so different than anyone else, but I mean it’s something I become used to being that black girl cuz that’s always what I’ve been at every on every team that I’ve played.”

“Like cuz it really doesn’t bother me or faze me anymore because I guess I have this self image of myself”

Wilson

“I don’t think it affects me at all and I could care less about what anybody thinks in the classroom because I’m getting my education regardless”

“A lot of people like me, when people say something to me it makes me play harder. It doesn’t affect me to where it takes me out of my game. It actually motivates me to play harder because I need to show you that I’m better than you since you want to talk bad to me.”

“But a lot of times guys tend to overlook it, but sometimes in the heat of the moment it can get to a person.”

“I laugh at [them] because I feel like people are being ignorant when they do those things.”

*Theme 8: Undeveloped Responses/Incidents*

There were a number of incidents that could not easily be classified into any of the aforementioned seven major themes because they could not be classified as a racial microaggression or were not fully endorsed by enough of the participants. Some participants indicated that Whites used explicit racial derogations towards them or their teammates. Some of the participants stated:

Brittany

“One of my teammates who were at the time was... she’s African American and basically the whole situation was the call that she got, it was like a brutal foul that she did, but the people in the audience were like-the girl she fouled was Caucasian so everybody in the audience, it was like just going off at her and saying you need to stop started calling her the the N-word. And we just like, we just took a step back and were like wow! Like people really do this. It was like at a game, a recreational game”

“Personally, I take a lot of offense to it because even though it shouldn’t be said but some people still do say it, but especially if the opposite like if a Caucasian say it then it’s like woah! Take me back to slave times. Like you’re not, I’m not outside in the field you’re not in the house type deal. So it kind of sets you back and be like you don’t have the right to call me that and I can’t call you something that you would take offense to.”

Keyshia

“I was at work actually and this guy, white guy, walked up to me and he was like he didn’t want me to check him out because I was Black. So, that’s one experience.”

“Umm, okay well while I was ringing up customers, he approached the checkout and he told my manager that he doesn’t want this Black lady checking him out so I was like “Okay,” and went to the next register. It didn’t bother me much. I was like “Oh well, people.”

Parker

“I was like walking home from school one day and these two white gentleman called out of truck, they’re like screaming the words and like the n-word to me. And it was kind of scary and hurtful, but I was like okay. I was scared but I was like this is just the world we live in kind of thing. Yea... it was sad that they had to call me that”

Tyrese

“Then sometimes you also hear the n-word being thrown around by people who are not Black but that doesn’t really get to me so much as long as it’s not directed towards me in an aggressive fashion so that’s all I can really think of off the top.”

Wilson

“I do remember an experience from my freshman year when we played Coastal, Carolina. Standing on the sidelines a couple of fans were screaming out the n-word at a couple of black players, but I don’t think they allowed it to affect them. But the police did escort those people out the stadium...”

“A lot of stuff that is said is very racial and I don’t think it should be said. From experience, I think it was [Midwest School] if I’m not mistaken, like their whole offensive line was White and our whole defense was Black. And in the whole game [they] was calling us the N-word and I’ll do this to you, you N-word. I’ll do this to your parents you N-word.”

In addition, a few of the participants described how they were perceived to be dangerous, a criminal, or deviant by others. They disclosed:

Charles

“[They] then called the police on us and then we had to talk to our coach and it was just out of control. I didn’t appreciate it at all.”

Parker

“I was like at a friend’s house or something and there’s like new people or whatever like it’s just like a chill environment or whatever and maybe like [they’ll]’ll like put something up, like put something in a way and be like... I don’t know if it’s just because I’m there and [they] think that I will steal it or whatever but then at the same time say if we’re like talking about in a conversation that something got stolen.”

“Yea, Oh I was like the new girl and I was Black probably like scared of me, intimidated. Probably didn’t know if I was going to be rough, mean or ghetto. So, yea... at first it was kind of hard and I could tell that people were kind of like oh you’re friends with her. Oh she’s Black. After growing up with them and spending more time it became easier.”

“It wasn’t necessarily that [they] didn’t want me to belong, it was just like I could tell that they never had a or were close or went to school with a black person, so it was just like different and kind of scary for them more than anything. Not saying that [they] like hated me or anything. It’s just [they] didn’t know what to expect and like, from like what you hear there’s not necessarily like good things going about... ohh Black people. I don’t know back where our time is like the South part of our town is like rough and people are doing like scary stuff and illegal things so that’s what their probably like all black people are rough and scary and doing illegal things. [They’re]’re probably like scared and didn’t really understand so, yea.”

Tyrese

“I live in Kennedy dorms and it’s a lot of White girls that stay in the dorms and you have to have keys to go in and out every door. One thing I noticed, and this is an actual

thought, a lot of times when you open the door and see someone behind you its just common courtesy to wait a few seconds and let them walk through the door or open the door for them. A lot of the times when I walk by them White girls they have their head down and they just don't say anything. Some of them be like "Oh thank you" ya know, and keep moving, which is what you're supposed to do. And some of them keep their head down and not say anything at all. It's like I can't get a thank you? I just waited 5 whole seconds to open the door for you because I'm opening the door and have my key out and can hear you walking behind me. I feel like [they] just see a big Black guy and he probably play a sport. He's probably rude or mean or...I don't know what [they] think to be honest with you. I don't know if they think I'm going to attack them or want to talk too much. All I just would appreciate is a thank you, a head nod, or some kind of acknowledgement and keep it moving. So I think Black athletes to some people are perceived as big and scary and stupid or dumb."

Two female participants described how they push themselves and have it hard as Black female athletes.

Brittany

"And then for a female you just have to push yourself even more cuz now you trying to come over that stereotype that females can't be as good in things such as Math or Science as a male can, so it's like 3X harder for me to achieve in the classroom."

"Basically, you gotta push harder, study harder. Study harder because you're already seen as a female being soft or a female can't you know do Math. Or a female can only read and write because that's what teachers are supposed to be, but I feel as if for female you just have to push harder because you can achieve because I mean there's other people, there's other women out there that have achieved you know being like Math professors or something like that. Something of that sort so I just feel a female is hard because you're already stereotyped, that's why. Even if you might not know it, but you really are."

Keyshia

"We have it hard."

"We as in dark skinned women. [They] look at us dark skinned girls as being different from light skin girls."

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The analysis of this study revealed eight main themes. The results of this study will be addressed in relation to these main themes. The discussion will include implications, limitations, and future recommendations for further explorations and examination of the current phenomenon under investigation.

The purpose of this study was to examine Black student athletes' experiences with racial microaggressions. The results support racial microaggression research proposed by Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) and Sue, Nadal et al., (2008). Of the original proposed microaggression themes, five were similar or overlapping: ascription of intelligence, assumed superiority of white cultural values/communication style, second-class citizen, denial of individual racism, and assumption of criminality. Sue, Nadal et al., (2008) found the themes of assumption of inferior status and assumed universality of the Black American experience which also emerged in this study as well. The exoticism of Black athletes is a new theme that emerged.

King, Leonard, and Kusz (2007) asserts that one of the most monumental moments in sports reflects the profound ways that White supremacy infects sport, painfully underscoring the ways that the history of integration within sport is not ostensibly a story of progress, but as a tale of the persistence of White supremacy. White supremacist systems have set and reinforced the foundation of White power. Athletes are often used as catalyst to reiterate racial and ethnic differences, hierarchies, and identities.

My investigation in this area indicate that racial microaggressions lead to psychological distress in Black student-athletes and that race-related stress occurs not only in response to overt racism but also in response to more subtle forms of racism. Microaggressions have a harmful and

lasting psychological impact (Sue, 2008). Participants reported feelings of anger, frustration, helplessness, invalidation and sadness while experiencing microaggressions. Ong, Fuller-Rowell, & Borrow (2009) found that daily life stressors, accompanied with racial discrimination mediates the relationship between chronic discrimination and psychological distress.

Although I did not specifically explore the differential impact of racial microaggressions, professors, coaches, teammates, students, and establishments in the local community often perpetuated them. The experiences of these Black student athletes demonstrates whether through the university or in sport, where conditions on the surface appear to be equal, inequality and discrimination still exist—albeit in subtle and hidden forms (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

One of the prominent issues reported by Black student athletes participating in this study involved the extent to which they felt being perceived as intellectually inferior or being assigned a status based on their race. For example, many of the participants believed that Whites perceived them to be less smart, “pushovers,” and less capable by teachers and fellow student peers. Consistent with research, participants experienced institutional and classroom climate of invalidation and insult (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo & Rivera, 2009). Additionally, one participant described she was perceived to be a “token” black person by her teammates. The effects of this can have real consequences resulting in a negative racial climate where Black students strive to maintain good academic standing to remain in school, play sport, and navigate through stereotypes that perpetuate racial microaggressions (Solorzano, et al., 2000).

Nearly all of the research participants discussed incidents in which Black cultural values and communication styles were devalued and deemed inferior while the superiority of White values and ways of communicating were upheld. For example, one

A subtheme that emerged from assumed superiority of White cultural values and communication style was the superiority of White standards of beauty, which can be cited in Sue, Nadal, et al., (2008). Hooks (2001) states:

“For Black people, the pain of learning that we cannot control our images, how we see ourselves (if our vision is not decolonized), or how we are seen is so intense that it rends us. It rips and tears at the seams of our efforts to construct self and identity. Often it leaves us ravaged by repressed rage, feeling weary, dispirited, and sometimes just plain old heartbroken. These are the gaps in our psyche that are the spaces where mindless complicity, self-deconstructive rage, hatred, and paralyzing despair enter. (Hooks, 2001, p. 3-4)

One of the male participants indicated a White coach would not allow his teammate to play baseball unless his dreadlocks were shaven. Three of the female participants described how their White teammates are fascinated with Black women’s hair, often to leading to uncomfortable discussions around it. Poran (2002) notes that White women are unaware of the racism in the beauty standard. “Beauty must be reconceptualized as a raced experience in order to understand and explore the fully the diverse experiences women have in relation to, and within, cultures” (Poran, 2002).

The findings in this study also revealed that Black athletes were exoticized because of their physical stature, athletic abilities, and skills. In the article titled “An Amazing Specimen: NFL Draft Experts’ Evaluation of Black Quarterbacks,” Bigler and Jeffries (2008) found that draft experts buy into and perpetuate this stereotype which adversely has an impact on Black college quarterbacks’ chances of matriculating to the National Football League. Representations of Black athletes reinforce the traditional hierarchy by reifying stereotypes of their animal-like nature, emphasizing their sexuality, aggressiveness, and physical power (Ferber, 2007). Ferber asserts that key elements of White supremacy and the new racism are reinforced by popular representations of Black male athletes. She states, “the new color-blind racism is less overt and

less biologically based than the racism and legally enshrined inequality and segregation of the past.” In viewing far-Right White supremacist and sport cultures, the author examined the continuing significance of the historical image of the buck and the obsession with controlling and “taming” Black male bodies. Furthermore common themes permeate the contemporary and construction of Black masculinity and work to justify color-blind racism and inequality (Ferber, 2008). These themes included a continued emphasis on Black male bodies as inherently aggressive, hypersexual, and violent; concern with taming and controlling Black male; inequality depicted as a product of a deficient Black culture; and the naturalization of White supremacy and White male superiority.

In many cases, Black men are thought to be naturally athletic or gifted. This myth of athletic superiority of Black makes is hard to dispel (Coakley, 2007). The media perpetuates the brain versus brawn myth. Buffington & Fraley (2008) indicated that sport commentators often expressed the idea that Blacks and Whites possessed different physical and mental skills related to sport, including some who felt these differences were directly attributable to race. Furthermore, Woodward (2004) examined whether professional football scouts described collegiate players in ways that correspond with U.S. race logic as articulated by Coakley (2007). The results showed that African American players were more likely to be described in physical terms, rather than mental terms than are White players in the same positions. Racial stacking or bias (Eitzen, Furst, 1989) is the over- or under representation of players of certain races in particular positions in sport teams. For example, one participant described quarterbacks in football traditionally being the “thinking” or White position, whereas Black players are often found in the skilled positions such as running backs or wide receivers. Stacking patterns exist and players may not be free to pursue the position they prefer (Woodward, 2004).



It was also reported that Black athletes were treated as second-class citizens by local establishments, coaches who had played favoritism toward White athletes and by their teammates. Male participants recalled numerous experiences of being referred to as “boy” by coaches and how it reminded them of slavery. It was also noted that Whites received special treatment had privilege over Blacks when it came to playing time on the field and being punished for breaking team rules. Some of the female participants experiences with feelings of second-class citizenship appeared to happen outside of sport. Although assumption of criminality did not emerge as a superordinate theme, it is documented in Sue’s (2008) original taxonomy of racial microaggressions and several participants described being deemed as rough, intimidating, and criminals. Smith, Allen, & Danley (2007) found that Black male students experience racial microaggressions in three domains: a) campus-academic, b) campus-social, and c) campus-public spaces. Through examining the experiences of 36 Black male students they found Black males to be stereotyped and placed under increased surveillance by community and local policing tactics on and off campus. Across the domains, Blacks were defined as being “out of place” and “fitting the description” of illegitimate nonmembers of the campus community. Although this study only looked at Black males, it supports the experiences of male and female participants of this current study. The misconceptions about Black athletes and the crimes that small portions of them commit must be put in their real social context. “The misleading perceptions need to be corrected so we can focus on the truth and what is really necessary. In that way we can help America live up to the dream that Jackie Robinson created for us more than 50 years ago” (Lapchick, 2000).

Many of the participants reported that Whites seemed to believe that all Black people are alike and share identical experiences and characteristics amongst each other. For instance,

participants reported that they were assumed to like chicken and watermelon because of their race. Social stereotypes may be expressed as personal beliefs about the characteristics of a group or as beliefs about the predominant culture view of a group (Krueger, 1996). In a study about personal beliefs and cultural stereotypes, Krueger (1996) found seventy-two percent of White participants to report favorable personal beliefs about Blacks, and 84% rated the cultural stereotypes of Blacks negatively. In October of 2008, a newsletter featured an 'Obama Bucks' ten dollar 'food stamp' with barbecued ribs, watermelon, koo-laid, and a bucket of fried chicken, labeled 'United States Food Stamps' (Apel, 2009). Images such as this reinforces demeaning racial stereotypes about Blacks in the United States. The dominant culture, (i.e. Whites) depict images of how White people want to see Blacks, thus it reproduces a stereotype causing a continuity of microaggressing. As Lapchick (2000) puts it, "sport as it is currently being interpreted, now provides Whites with the chance to talk about athletes in a way that reinforces those stereotypes about African Americans."

Brown, T., Jackson, Brown, K., Sellers, Keiper, & Manuel (2003) found that White and Black athletes reported similar levels of agreement with the statement that racial and ethnic discrimination is no longer a problem in the United States. Furthermore, the results indicated that White and Black intercollegiate student athletes held similar perceptions regarding racial and ethnic discrimination; a pattern rarely observed in public opinion literature. However, in this study the lived experiences of Black athletes felt as though race existed in their sport but discourses were often avoided. One participant described that sensitive topics such as race or religion were not to be discussed. Other participants noted that when issues of race were brought to the forefront, their experiences were denied and invalidated by coaches and their teammates.

In the face of racism, the Black athletes used a variety of coping strategies to combat overt and covert forms of racism. Many participants noted that they did not let certain situations “faze” them and choose their battles carefully. Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli (2000) examined whether or not African Americans used specific types of coping strategies in confronting discrimination. They found that women preferred avoidance coping for racism experienced on a personal level. This supports the results found in the current phenomenon being investigated. For example, one female athlete participant described how she distanced herself from a microaggressor. Two other female participants spoke about how they overlooked negative situations that dealt with race. For African Americans in general, seeking social support and racism condition were the best predictors of racism-related stress (Utsey et al., 2000). Sanders Thompson (2006) found that emotional discharge and past experiences of discrimination were positively associated with re-experiencing symptoms. Including implicit measures in assessments of responses to racism has the potential to increase our ability to identify maladaptive coping responses, which may then be altered to reduce resultant levels of psychological distress (Smith, Stewart, Myers, Latu, 2008).

It is also important to discuss the old-fashioned overt expressions of racial hatred that the Black athletes experienced in this study. One male participant vividly recalled two football games in which he played where the opposing White players would use the word “nigger” to cause dissonance and affect their performance on the field. Several other participants, male and female, also noted how the derogatory word nigger was either directed at them to cause harm or joked about.

### *Implications for Future Study*

The purpose for undertaking this study seemed to reveal important implications. Some of these implications are outlined below.

1. Helping professionals (i.e., counseling psychologist, counselors, sport psychology consultants) have an obligation to understand the racial realities of their clients. These professionals are in a position to validate Black athletes experiences and be effective in multicultural counseling and consulting.
2. Helping professionals must be aware of cultural-centered ethical guidelines for their professions.
3. Coaches could benefit from coaching education workshops around diversity and multiculturalism. More specifically around the language that is used with Black athletes as participants in the study found “boy” to be demeaning.
4. Educators must recognize their stereotypical beliefs and biases they hold about Black athletes. In understanding themselves, they can become more effective in teaching students of color.
5. Although not mentioned in the results, a theme of Black athletes’ perceptions of athletic superiority emerged in the study. Researchers could further explore the assumptions that Black athletes hold of themselves and how these myths are internalized.
6. Research paradigms such as critical race theory should be used in an attempt to understanding the meaning of race and racism in sport. In addition, qualitative methodology should also be used to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of Black athletes.

### *Limitations*

As with all naturalistic scientific inquiry, this study is predisposed to several limitations. The following limitations to this study were participants in the study were collected using purposeful criterion sampling procedures, which requires as a condition of inclusion. Thus, only the experiences of Black athletes were investigated. One must also be careful in the generalizations of the current student based on a very small sample size, as qualitative research is not normally concerned with the number of research subjects. In addition, participants only represent NCAA Division-I collegiate sports in the southeastern part of the United States, which may present regional cultural differences. The study relied on transcripts, thus the verbal inflections or articulations presented during the discussion of racial microaggressions will not be accounted for in the data analysis. Lastly, the study was limited to the extent that it is based on the primary researcher's interpretations of data pertaining to perception of racial microaggressions experienced.

### *Conclusions*

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Black student athletes are prone to and experience racial microaggressions due to interracial encounters.
- Black student athletes in this particular NCAA Division-I sport program are often deemed as intellectually inferior and as lesser human beings.
- Issues of exoticization, presumptions of criminality, and other racial microaggression experienced by these Black athletes had harmful consequences for their well being as a student and athlete in their respective sports.

- Black athletes use coping mechanisms to deal with day-to-day forms of subtle racism and discrimination.
- It is important to acknowledge other types of microaggressions such as gender, sexual orientation, and disability because they may have an equally detrimental affect on marginalized groups.
- Racial microaggressions are not limited to White-to people of color interactions. Interethnic racial microaggressions occur between people of color as well as this occasionally emerged in the data.

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## APPENDIX A

### RESEARCH QUESTION, LIMITATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND DEFINITIONS

### *Research Question*

The primary research question for this study is:

1. How do Black student-athletes experience racial microaggressions in sport and the classroom?

### *Delimitations*

The delimitations of this study are:

1. The study is delimited to NCAA Division I Black athletes in the southeast and the participants may not be a representative sample to generalize all Black athletes to all southeastern universities.
2. The study will interview 8-10 NCAA Division I Black athletes. Although 8-10 is a small sample size, it is considered adequate for qualitative phenomenological induction.
3. Black athletes will have acknowledged that subtle forms of racism continues to exist in contemporary U.S. Society, and encountered personal experiences with subtle forms of racism in academia and athletics.

### *Limitations*

As with all naturalistic scientific inquiry, this study is predisposed to several limitations. The following limitations to this study are:

1. Participants in the study will be collected using purposeful criterion sampling procedures, which requires as a condition of inclusion. Thus, only the experiences of Black athletes will be investigated.
2. Participants will only represent NCAA Division I collegiate sports.

3. The study will rely on transcripts, thus the verbal inflections or articulations presented during the discussion of racial microaggressions will not be accounted for in the data analysis.
4. The study is limited to the extent that it is based on the primary researcher's interpretations of data pertaining to perception of racial microaggressions experienced.

### *Assumptions of the Study*

The following assumptions were made in reference to this study:

1. The personal experiences of Black athletes are important in better understanding the lived experiences of racial microaggressions.
2. The interview will serve the purpose of exploring and gathering valid accounts and stories of Black athletes to give us a deeper look at population's personal experiences.
3. Due to the nature of the humanistic approach, the participants in this research will be able to openly and honestly convey their own recounts, thoughts, and feelings of their experiences as Black athletes.
4. Participants will accurately and honestly describe the phenomenon in their own words during the interview.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following definitions are utilized in the present study.

1. Race – a.) A population of people who are believed to be naturally or biologically distinct from other populations. b.) A social construction that permits the exploitation of one group over another with the development of the ideology that justifies it (Coakley, 2007; Dovidio, 2000).

2. Ethnicity – A category of people regarded as socially distinct because they share a way of life, a collective history, and a sense of themselves as people. (Coakley, 2007).
3. Racial Ideology – A web of ideas and beliefs that people use to give meaning to specific physical traits such as skin color and to evaluate people in terms of how they are classified by race (Coakley, 2007).
4. Racism – Attitudes, actions, and policies based on the belief that people in one racial category are inherently superior to people in one or more other categories. A system of advantage based on race. (Coakley, 2007, Tatum, 1997).
5. Discrimination – A selectively unjustified negative behavior toward members of the target group that involves denying individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish (Allport, 1954, p. 51 as cited in Dovidio, 2000).
6. Prejudice – An unfair negative attitude toward a social group or a person perceived to be a member of that group (Dovidio, 2000).
7. Racial stereotype – A generalization of beliefs about a particular group or its members that is unjustified because it reflects faulty thought processes or overgeneralization, factual incorrectness, inordinate rigidity, an inappropriate pattern of attribution, or a rationalization for a prejudiced attitude or discriminatory behavior (Dovidio, 2000).
8. Racial Microaggressions – Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group,



and are expressed in three forms: microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations (Sue, 2008).

9. Microassaults – A blatant verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack intended to convey discriminatory and biased sentiments (Sue, 2008).
10. Microinsults – Unintentional behaviors or verbal comments that convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person's racial heritage identity, gender identity, or sexual orientation identity (Sue, 2008).
11. Microinvalidations – Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or dismiss the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of the target group (Sue, 2008).
12. Triangulation – Strategies for reducing systematic bias and distortion during data analysis (Patton, 2002).
13. Qualitative Interview – The researcher is used as an instrument for data collection and must attempt to conduct the research free of judgments, assumptions or bias towards the information described by the subject (Czech, et al., 2001).

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

***COLLEGE OF HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES***

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***DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & KINESIOLOGY***

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**INFORMED CONSENT**

I understand that the study in which I am about to voluntarily participate is part of a master's thesis entitled "The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Black Athletes: Implications for Counseling and Sport Psychology" conducted by Terrence A. Jordan II [tj00459@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:tj00459@georgiasouthern.edu), (414) 975-6965.

I understand the researcher is asking me to participate because he believes that my ideas and feelings about day-to-day forms of discrimination and subtle racism in sport would help him better understand how Black/African American athletes experience and respond to racial microaggressions.

The benefits of doing this study is that I might learn some new things about myself and, I might enjoy sharing my ideas about my discrimination, racism, and how it is experienced as a Division-I college athlete. In addition, my participation in this study may help the researcher and others better understand Black/African American athletes' experiences and responses to discrimination. There are however, risks associated with this study. The risks for participating in this research are discomfort with some topics raised in the interview. Questions about discrimination and forms of racism can cause participants to feel anger, confusion, or resentment.

The researcher and an analysis team will be the only people who know that I am participating in this study. Anytime they use the information I give them, they will always identify me with a fake name. When the researcher interviews me, I give permission to tape record the interviews and also take notes to remind him of what we talked about. The researcher and the analysis team will be the only ones who get to listen to these tapes and when they are not using them, they will be kept in a locked cabinet that they only have the key to in the sport psychology laboratory. I understand that after the study is finished, all of the tapes will be destroyed by December of 2010.

As part of my participation in this study, the researcher will spend time interviewing me for 45-60 minutes and ask me questions about my experiences as a Black/African American athlete. The most important thing for me to remember while I am participating in this study is that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions he asks me.

I should also understand that I can decide to not participate in this study, or stop doing it any time after I have started-this is my decision. If I decide to stop doing this study, my decision will not affect any future contact I have with Georgia Southern University.

By signing below, I am agreeing to allow Terrence A. Jordan II to use information I provide in presentation and/or publication with the understanding that Terrence A. Jordan II will answer any inquiries I may have at any time concerning these procedures and/or the investigation.

Should I have any further questions regarding this project, I may contact Terrence A. Jordan II, his faculty supervisor, Dr. Leon Spencer at [lespence@goergiasouthern.edu](mailto:lespence@goergiasouthern.edu), (912) 478-5465, or the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at [IRB@goergiasouthern.edu](mailto:IRB@goergiasouthern.edu), (912) 478-0843.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

---

Investigator Signature

---

Date

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Appendix I: Script for Interviewer

Hi, my name is Terrence Jordan. Thank you for coming here to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to gain a better understanding of day-to-day discrimination and experiences of subtle racism. I am sure that you are familiar with covert forms of discrimination such as racial slurs or hate crimes. However, today I am interested in hearing about your experiences of subtle acts of being discriminated against because of your race. These experiences may have occurred in any setting or at anytime in your life. I will be asking you some questions that I encourage you to answer to the best of your ability and I recognize that you will have unique experiences of being subtly discriminated against. There are no wrong answers.

At this time, I would like to inform you that our conversation will be recorded so I don't have to take many notes. So, I am going to give you a form that basically states that your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary and that you may decline to participate and stop the interview at any time. Please read this sheet carefully before signing it. It discusses the potential risks to you as a participant of this interview, as well as the use of audio taping during this session. I'd like you the opportunity to ask any questions that you may have before we begin the interview.

#### *Statement of Confidentiality*

I will be audio taping this session in an effort to maintain the integrity of your dialogue. However, your identities will not be revealed to anyone, and only the researchers will have access to this tape. This interview is to be considered confidential, and I can ensure you that I will respect your rights to privacy by not repeating any portion of this interview outside of this session.

### *General Question*

Black Americans often have experiences in which they are subtly, invalidated, discriminated against, and made to feel uncomfortable because of their race. In thinking about your daily experiences, could you describe a situation in which you witnessed or were personally subtly discriminated against because of your race?

### *Interview Questions*

- In thinking about your daily experiences, what are some subtle ways that people treat you differently because of your race?
- Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable, insulted, or disrespected by a comment that had racial overtones.
- In what ways have others made you feel “put down” because of your cultural values or communication style?
- In what ways have others expressed that they think you are a second-class citizen or inferior to them?
- Have people suggested that you don’t belong because of your race?
- What have people done to invalidate your experiences of being discriminated against?
- “How does racial discrimination affect your ability to perform in the classroom? In your sport?”
- Think of some of the stereotypes that exist about your racial group. How have others subtly expressed their stereotypical beliefs about you?
- Has anyone ever assumed that you were an athlete because of your race, and if so, how did that make you feel?
- What is your opinion of how Black athletes are portrayed on campus?

- How has being Black affected your choice of sport?
- If I someone was to say, race does not exist on the playing field, how would you respond?

*Transition Questions*

- What are some of the ways that you dealt with these experiences?
- What do you think the overall impact of your experience has had on your life?

*Ending Questions*

- So today you shared several experiences of subtle discrimination. Some of the things you mentioned were...
- Is there anything else you would like to share that I did not ask?

[Adopted from Sue, D., Bucceri, J., Lin, A., Nadal, K., & Torino, G. (2007)]



APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs <b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Terrence A. Jordan II  
2000 Stambuk Ln. #1122  
Statesboro, GA 30458

**CC:** Charles E. Patterson  
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** February 16, 2010

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H10205** and titled "**The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Black Athletes: Implications for Counseling and Sport Psychology**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to **10** subjects.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer